

# A Miniature Mosaic Icon of St. Demetrios in Byzantium and the Renaissance

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With insouciant ease, St. Demetrios, the patron saint of Thessaloniki, stands before the gold ground of an exquisitely colored mosaic icon in Sassoferrato, Italy (figs. 1–6). The saint rests his right hand on a spear, while the other hand awkwardly grasps the back of a large kite-shaped shield with a rampant lion. St. Demetrios wears the elaborate military armor of the finest Byzantine warrior saints of the day; this is the saintly dress uniform. Tiny gold cubes simulate actual reflections on the metallic armor, shoulder guards, “muscle” cuirass on the abdomen, and the strips—called “feathers” in Greek—that hang down from it.<sup>1</sup> The artist has skillfully integrated the shield into the composition by continuing the diagonal of the X-shaped belt on the torso through the left side of the shield and onto the cloak below.

The mosaic and frame (fig. 1; 24.3 × 16 cm) are about three-quarters the size of a page of *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* (28 × 21 cm); the mosaic itself (fig. 2; 14 × 7 cm) is half the length and one-third the width of this page and therefore small but packed with detail. Average-sized tesserae measure 0.7 × 0.7 mm; in comparison, the letter o of the font used in this journal (1 × 1 mm) is 50% larger. The tesserae are laid out at the

remarkable density of 180 cubes per cm<sup>2</sup>. The gold lines on the saint’s abdomen end in gold triangles that taper down to 0.2 mm. The mosaicist displayed great skill, first in making such small cubes and then in dexterously setting them on the wax ground of this poplar panel.<sup>2</sup> The preciousness and intricacy of the mosaic were surely part of its appeal in Byzantium and the Renaissance, the two eras to be discussed in the respective parts of this essay.

The mosaic is a coloristic tour de force. The tiny gold cubes of the background, set at varied angles, scatter the reflected light to create a luminous sheen. Next in prominence is the deep rich blue of the background of the shield with a prancing lion that is as tightly bound as a coiled spring. The small squares of the floor (fig. 3) and the smaller squares of the saint’s halo (fig. 4) create a rapid *pizzicato* rather different from the usual *largo tempo* of other Byzantine art. And all this is packed into a gilded silver frame, whose varied surfaces also sparkle in any light.

The damaged border has several unusual features, beginning with the lead ampoule at the top. According to the inscription on the right side of the frame, the ampoule (fig. 1) contained myron, a semi-liquid

1 On the “muscle” cuirass, a type of armor that had long ago passed out of actual use and survived only in traditional iconography, see P. L. Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints: Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography* (843–1261) (Boston, 2010), 129–32, 162–66, 170–74.

2 On technical details of the icon, see A. Aldrovandi, M. C. Casini, G. Lanterna, M. Matteini, M. R. Nepoti, I. Tosini, R. T. Ferroni, G. Pieri, C. Castelli, P. Bracco, and G. Barucca, “Indagini scientifiche per lo studio dei materiali costitutivi e il restauro dell’icona musiva di San Demetrio,” *OPD restauro: Rivista dell’Opificio delle pietre dure e laboratori di restauro di Firenze* 8 (1996): 9–29, at 9. See especially the detailed photographs on pls. 82, 83.

substance derived from the tomb of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki; thus, it was a contact relic. The ampoule itself belongs to a group of pilgrim's vessels, called *eulogiai*, that date from the twelfth to the fifteenth century.<sup>3</sup> No other Byzantine icon includes such an object, and few have relics of any sort.<sup>4</sup> The two crosses at the upper corners of the frame have a beta in each quadrant, a device that appeared on imperial coins, and in the lower corners is the Byzantine double-headed eagle. Both give the appearance of an imperial icon, although no such icon survives. The word *ΑΓΙΟΣ* (holy) fills out the lower margin. The missing left border once had an inscription arranged in lozenges like the one on the right side (see below, figs. 21, 22), another usual feature for a Byzantine icon. These and other aspects of the frame require further discussion.

The icon was first attested historically in 1472, when Pope Sixtus IV authorized Niccolò Perotti (d. 1480) to donate a group of reliquaries, including the icon, to the church of S. Chiara in Sassoferato.<sup>5</sup> At this time, Perotti served as the archbishop of Sipontino and previously had been the secretary and editor of Cardinal Basileios Bessarion (1399/1400?–18

3 C. Bakirtzis, "Byzantine Ampullae from Thessaloniki," in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. R. Ousterhout (Urbana, IL, 1990), 140–49; F. A. Bauer, *Eine Stadt und ihr Patron: Thessaloniki und der Heilige Demetrios* (Regensburg, 2013), 343–51. On the shrine or shrines of St. Demetrios at the basilica in Thessaloniki, now see J. Bogdanović, *The Framing of Sacred Space: The Canopy and the Byzantine Church* (New York, 2017), 206–16; L. Veneskey, "Truth and Mimesis in Byzantium: A Speaking Reliquary of Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki," *AH* 42.1 (2019): 16–39. For the early history of *eulogiai*, see G. Vikar, *Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art* (Washington, DC, 2010), 13–17.

4 Three icons at the Patmos monastery had relics, according to the inventory of 1200: M. Chatzidakis, *Icons of Patmos: Questions of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Painting* (Athens, 1985), 21; C. Diehl, "Le trésor et la bibliothèque de Patmos au commencement du 13<sup>e</sup> siècle," *BZ* 1.3 (1892): 488–525, at 512.

5 G. Barucca in Aldrovandi et al., "Indagini scientifiche," 22; G. Barucca, "I reliquiari donati da Niccolò Perotti a Sassoferato," *Studi umanistici piceni* 12 (1992): 9–46. On Perotti generally, see the short biography by J.-L. Charlet in *Centuria Latinae: Cent une figures humanistes de la Renaissance aux Lumières offertes à Jacques Chomarat*, ed. C. Nativel (Geneva, 1997), 601–5, and the bibliography by C. Kallendorf in *Oxford Bibliographies: Renaissance and Reformation*, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195399301/obo-9780195399301-0354.xml?rskey=eQfyFn&result=226>, accessed 13 March 2021. Still valuable is the biographical account by R. P. Oliver: *Niccolò Perotti's Version of the Enchiridion of Epictetus* (Urbana, IL, 1954), 1–34.



Fig. 1. Miniature mosaic icon of St. Demetrios with frame. Sassoferato, Museo Civico. Mosaic early fourteenth century; frame 1464–65. 24.3 × 16.0 cm. Photo by author; courtesy of the Comune di Sassoferato.

November 1472), formerly the Orthodox metropolitan of Nicaea. Bessarion had attended the Council in Ferrara/Florence for church unity (1438–45), converted to Catholicism, and became a cardinal. An indefatigable collector of Greek manuscripts, he hosted in Rome émigré Greeks fleeing the fall of Constantinople. Perotti was a key member of the Cardinal's *familia*, or what in the 1450s Perotti termed "our" academy, and later the *Bessarionea Accademia*.<sup>6</sup> Perotti remained close to his patron until Bessarion's death.

6 C. Bianca, "L'ambiente romano dell' accademia," in *Bessarione e la sua Accademia*, ed. A. Gutkowski and E. Prinzivalli (Rome, 2012), 57–63; J. Monfasani, "Two Fifteenth-Century 'Platonic Academies':





Fig. 2.  
Miniature mosaic icon of  
St. Demetrios, without frame.  
14.0 × 7.0 cm. Photo by  
author; courtesy of the  
Comune di Sassoferrato.



Fig. 3.  
Miniature mosaic icon of  
St. Demetrios, detail of  
lower half of panel. Photo  
by author; courtesy of the  
Comune di Sassoferrato.



Fig. 4.  
Miniature mosaic icon of  
St. Demetrios, detail of  
head and nimbus. Photo  
by author; courtesy of the  
Comune di Sassoferrato.







Fig. 5. Miniature mosaic icon of St. Demetrios, detail of upper frame. Photo by author; courtesy of the Comune di Sassoferrato.



Fig. 6. Box for miniature mosaic icon of St. Demetrios. Photo by author; courtesy of the Comune di Sassoferrato.



After the suppression of religious institutions in the nineteenth century, the icon and Perroti's other reliquaries were transferred to the Municipal Council of Sassoferrato and today are housed in a small museum in the city.<sup>7</sup> The icon has often been exhibited in recent years—although never with its wooden container (fig. 6)—and has been the subject of several recent publications, but useful literature on the panel goes back to the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Two decades ago, the Opificio delle pietre dure (OPD) in Florence restored the icon and published a detailed scientific report about it.<sup>9</sup> The conservators determined that the <sup>14</sup>C date of the wood support of the icon was 1279 ± 26 CE. In his entry on the icon for the Metropolitan Museum's exhibition *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)* of 2004, Jannic

Bessarion's and Ficino's," in *On Renaissance Academies*, ed. M. Pade (Rome, 2011), 61–76, at 61–65.

7 Barucca in Aldrovandi et al., "Indagini scientifiche," 22.

8 Exhibitions since 1990: S. Romano in *Splendori di Bisanzio: Testimonianze e riflessi d'arte e cultura bizantina nelle chiese d'Italia*, ed. Giovanni Morello (Milan, 1990), 112–13, no. 42; J. Durand in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, ed. H. C. Evans (New Haven, 2004), 231–33 with literature, no. 139; K. B. Gerry in *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, ed. M. Bagnoli, H. A. Klein, C. G. Mann, and J. Robinson (New Haven, 2010), 201, no. 115; B. Daskas in *To Hμέτερον Κάλλος: Βυζαντινές εικόνες από τη Θεσσαλονίκη. Our Sacred Beauty: Byzantine Icons from Thessaloniki*, ed. F. Karagianni (Thessaloniki, 2018), 212–17, no. 15.

Other discussions in recent decades: A. Cutler, "From Loot to Scholarship: Changing Modes in the Italian Response to Byzantine Artifacts, ca. 1200–1750," *DOP* 49 (1995): 237–67, at 253–54; C. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Burlington, VT, 2003), 92; M. Dennert, "Displaying an Icon: The Mosaic Icon of Saint Demetrios at Sassoferrato and Its Frame," in *New Research on Late Byzantine Goldsmiths' Works (13th–15th Centuries)*, ed. A. Bosselmann-Ruickbie (Mainz, 2019), 43–53 (published in an earlier form in *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies London, 21–26 August 2006*, vol. 3 [Burlington, VT, 2006], 313–14); G. Vespignani, "Santi militari, guerra santa e aquile bicipiti a Bisanzio e dopo Bisanzio (sec. XIV–XV): Considerazioni attorno alla icona di san Demetrio del Museo Civico di Sassoferrato," in *Studi di storia del cristianesimo: Per Alba Maria Orselli*, ed. L. Canetti, M. Caroli, E. Morini, and R. Savigni (Ravenna, 2008), 337–49; Bauer, *Stadt und ihr Patron*, 452–61. S. Moretti has reviewed the older literature: *Roma bizantina: Opere d'arte dall'impero di Costantinopoli nelle collezioni romane* (Rome, 2014), 24–26, nn. 81–94.

For the eighteenth-century study, see G. C. Amaduzzi, *Anecdota litteraria ex manuscriptis codicibus eruta*, ed. G. C. Amaduzzi and G. L. Bianconi, vol. 3 (Rome, 1774), tab. I. On Amaduzzi, see the entry by A. Fabri in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1960), 612–15.

9 See n. 2.

Durand adopted this scientific dating and thereby resolved lingering questions about the icon's date. Durand assigned it to the upper end of the <sup>14</sup>C range, or the beginning of the fourteenth century.<sup>10</sup> His dating is reasonable and will be followed with an allowance for the seasoning of the wood, but other implications of the OPD study require further attention.

A closely related group of miniature mosaics can be grouped around the Sassoferrato icon and similarly dated. The mosaic's simple but intriguing iconography leads to a new proposed patron, the protostrator Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotēs. More vexing is the icon's gilded silver frame, whose date has ranged from ca. 1300 to the seventeenth century and has been credited to diverse patrons. Here it will be argued that the frame is the creation of the Italian Renaissance, even though it has no parallels in Byzantium or the Renaissance. Finally, the icon's rare and unstudied container provides further clues to the history of the ensemble. The frame and box will be attributed to Rome about 1465 and credited to the circle of humanists and Greek émigrés around Cardinal Bessarion during the pontificate of the Venetian Paul II (1464–71). That group included Thomas Palaiologos, the former despot of the Morea and the person, it will be proposed, responsible for the Renaissance reframing of the icon.

Since many aspects of the icon are unprecedented, a recurring issue will be the interpretation of uniqueness when a principal method of art history is comparison.<sup>11</sup> While the method normally does more, in this study comparison will be employed to reveal anomalous elements. Two items are compared and, if found similar, the meaning or significance of one is transferred to the other. However, when difference and not similarity is observed, the method fails because it cannot account

10 Durand in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 231. The dating to ca. 1300 contravenes the chronology for miniature mosaics established by A.-A. Krickelberg-Pütz, who assigned the Sassoferrato icon to the late Palaiologan period: "Der Mosaikikone des Hl. Nikolaus in Aachen-Burtscheid," *Aachener Kunstblätter* 50 (1982): 9–141, at 98–99. She, however, noted the formal relation of the Sassoferrato panel to the St. Theodore Stratelates in the Hermitage and St. Theodore Tiro in the Vatican (100), a matter discussed below. E. C. Ryder has examined the genre generally in his PhD dissertation: "Micromosaic Icons of the Late Byzantine Period" (PhD diss., New York University, 2007). I have not been able to read J. Lansdowne, "The Micromosaic of the Man of Sorrows at Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2019).

11 J. Elsner, ed., *Comparativism in Art History* (New York, 2017).



for singularity. Thus, other strategies will be employed. Chief among them is fidelity to context, or determining what historical circumstances best fit the evidence; from the microcosm of artistic detail, a macrocosm of culture and tradition must be reconstructed. In the Middle Ages, gaps in documentation are inevitable. Yet even if the medieval jigsaw puzzle lacks all its parts, an overall image can still be discerned.

The Sassoferrato icon, however, is missing more than its share of puzzle pieces, hence the multiplicity of published interpretations for the mosaic and its frame. Most recently, Martin Dennert proposed that the whole was made for Demetrios Palaiologos (ca. 1296–1344);<sup>12</sup> Franz Alto Bauer termed its later frame a *hyperbyzantinische Collage*;<sup>13</sup> Anthony Cutler argued that Perotti commissioned the mosaic and frame between 1449 and 1460;<sup>14</sup> and Maria Theochari thought the icon was reframed in Italy during the seventeenth century.<sup>15</sup> Such a range of opinions is seldom encountered today for Byzantine (much less Renaissance) art, hence the challenges that the icon presents. The following discussion is ordered by the components of the icon: mosaic, frame, and box.

### Mosaic

A slight adjustment to the dating of the icon's wooden support to 1279 ± 26 CE is needed because a <sup>14</sup>C date refers to the year when the organism—in this case, the tree—died and ceased replenishing the carbon in its cells. The small amount of radioactive <sup>14</sup>C in the cells slowly begins to decay at a measurable rate that determines when the tree was cut.<sup>16</sup> Skilled artists, and the Sassoferrato mosaicist was one of the finest, did not work with green wood but allowed it to dry. The icon is painted on poplar wood, a favored material for medieval and Renaissance panel paintings in the Mediterranean. The duration of poplar seasoning has not been measured, but a reasonable estimate might be

two to eight years, based on the evidence of oak panel paintings.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the range of dates for when the miniature mosaic icon was made can be adjusted to 1255/61 to 1307/1313. Durand's attribution to the beginning of fourteenth century remains unchanged and should apply to the group of miniature mosaics closely related to the Sassoferrato panel.

The artist of the Sassoferrato icon had certain proclivities, especially a love for ornamental patterns as seen in the border, halo, floor, and the leggings of the saint. Alternating colors begin at the mosaic's outer border, where gray and dark blue cubes alternate. The dazzling array of the gold, red, and dark blue tesserae of the saint's stockings turns his legs into an abstract, two-dimensional pattern that contrasts with the illusionism of the rest of the figure. The repetition of contrasting colors continues in the floor tiles that are bordered by a row of single gold cubes. In the nimbus, lines of gold also surround small squares made up of nine tesserae. At the center of each square is a single gold tessera, and around it are either red and gray or dark blue and gray tesserae. On either side of the nimbus, overlapping squares frame Greek titles, with the words *Saint* at the left and *Demetrios* at the right.<sup>18</sup> In the face, the mosaicist has arranged subtle gradations of salmon, tan, and off-white to enliven the figure. Pure white appears only at the edge of the saint's left eye.

A related group of miniature mosaics has the same decorative details, including borders of a single row of alternating colors and checkerboard floors of red, blue, and gold cubes.<sup>19</sup> Title panels on dark grounds

12 Dennert, "Displaying an Icon," 48–50.

13 Bauer, *Stadt und ihr Patron*, 460.

14 Cutler, "From Loot to Scholarship," 253–54.

15 M. Theochari, "Υψηλιδωτή εικόν του αγίου Δημητρίου και η ανεύρεσις των λειψάνων του αγίου εις Ιταλίαν," *Πρακτικά της Ακαδημίας Αθηνών* 53 (1978): 508–36, at 516–17.

16 D. Stulik, "Radiocarbon Dating in Art Research," in *The Science of Paintings*, W. S. Taft Jr. and J. W. Mayer (New York, 2000), 192–205.

17 On the seasoning of oak, see P. Klein, "Dendrochronological Analyses of Panel Paintings," in *The Structural Conservation of Panel Paintings: Proceedings of a Symposium at the J. Paul Getty Museum, 24–28 April 1995*, ed. K. Dardes and A. Rothe (Los Angeles, 1998), 39–54, at 44–45; P. Kuniholm, "Dendrochronology (Tree-Ring Dating) of Panel Paintings," in Taft and Mayer, *Science of Paintings*, 206–14. I thank Peter Kuniholm for advice on dendrochronology.

18 S. Pedone has included a useful table of details about mosaic icons, including size: "L'icona di Cristo di Santa Maria in Campitelli: Un esempio de 'Musaico parvissimo,'" *RIASA* 60 (2005): 95–131, at 119–31.

19 Mosaic icons of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia at Dumbarton Oaks; St. Theodore Stratelates in the Hermitage; St. Theodore Tiron in the Vatican; St. Nicholas in Kiev; St. John the Baptist in the treasury of S. Marco, Venice; icons of Christ in the treasury of S. Caterina in Galatina, Italy, and at the Esphigmenou Monastery on Mount Athos; and a diptych of the twelve feasts in Florence. See respectively S. A. Boyd, Y. Piatnitsky, and A. Ballian in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 224, no. 133; 229, no. 136; 231, no. 138; I. Furlan, *Icone byzantine a mosaico* (Milan, 1979), figs. 28, 33–35; A. Effenberger



Fig. 7. Miniature mosaic icon of John the Baptist. Venice, Treasury of San Marco 104. Early fourteenth century. 15.1 × 7.3 cm. Archivio Fotografico della Procuratoria di San Marco. Courtesy of the Procuratoria di San Marco.



Fig. 8. Miniature mosaic icon of the Annunciation. London, Victoria and Albert Museum 7231-1860. Early fourteenth century. 15.2 × 10.2 cm. © Victoria and Albert Museum.

are often rectangular and framed by two thin borders of a single tessera, the inner one of which is gold.<sup>20</sup> Though the shape of the title frames flanking the head

in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 208, 219–20, no. 129. The mosaic icons of the Virgin Eleousa now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (P. Dandridge and H. C. Evans in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 217–18, no. 128) and of the Virgin Hodegetria in Sofia (M. Vassilaki in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 215–16, no. 126) have borders of alternating tessera colors, but the cubes are larger and not uniform. Thus, I do not consider these icons to be a part of the group. The mosaic icon of Christ in Chimay, Belgium (Effenberger in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 212, 223, no. 132) also has a border of a row of alternating colors, but other aspects of the panel exclude it as well. Many of these icons resemble the Sassoferrato panel in size, as seen in Pedone (see n. 18).

<sup>20</sup> The titles of the icons of Christ in Lavra and Esphigenou are inscribed in similarly framed roundels.

of St. Demetrios differs from the group, all share a dark ground; in the case of the St. Demetrios icon, it was made of valuable lapis lazuli. It was also used for the ground of the shield.<sup>21</sup> Closest to the Sassoferrato icon are the icon of John the Baptist in Venice (fig. 7),<sup>22</sup> the Annunciation at the Victoria and Albert Museum (fig. 8), a larger diptych in Florence with twelve feast scenes that includes the Annunciation (fig. 9), the icon of St. Theodore Stratelates in the Hermitage (fig. 10),

<sup>21</sup> On the blue color in the mosaic, see Aldrovandi et al., “Indagini scientifiche,” 13–14.

<sup>22</sup> The restoration of this icon is discussed in C. Bertelli, *Restituzioni 2004: Tesori d'arte restaurati*, 12th ed. (Vicenza, 2004), 120–23, 152–55.





Fig. 9.  
Miniature mosaic  
diptych, detail of the  
Annunciation.  
Florence, Museo del  
Opera del Duomo.  
Early fourteenth  
century. Ca. 9 × 9 cm.  
Photo courtesy of  
Art Resource.



Fig. 10.  
Miniature mosaic icon of  
St. Theodore Stratelates.  
St. Petersburg, State  
Hermitage Museum W-29.  
Early fourteenth century.  
9.0 × 7.4 cm. Photo  
courtesy of the State  
Hermitage Museum.

and a few others.<sup>23</sup> The nimbi of these icons are filled with little squares containing nine cubes and provide a close parallel to the ornamental halo of the Sassoferrato icon.<sup>24</sup> The recently restored John the Baptist in Venice corroborates the dating of the group because he is practically identical to the same figure in the apse of the parekklesion of the Pammakaristos in Constantinople from ca. 1310.<sup>25</sup>

Comparing the London Annunciation icon with the corresponding scene of the Florence diptych reveals the technical skill and artistic hallmarks of the master mosaicist. This artist makes the right foot shorter than the left in both angels and depicts their toes similarly, sure Morellian clues to artistic identity.<sup>26</sup> A chevron of nine gold tesserae decorates the Virgin's footstool in both, and the chrysography of the angels' wings is the same as well. The main aesthetic difference between the

two Annunciations is the proportion of the pictorial fields. While the width of each scene in the Florence and London panels is comparable (ca. 9 × 9 cm vs. 15.2 × 10.2 cm), their heights differ, creating a square and a rectangle, respectively. Consequently, the mosaicist of the London icon elongated Mary, the angel, the columns, and the background pavilions, and reduced the architectural elements between the two figures, thereby creating a more dramatic encounter.

The mosaicist of the Sassoferrato panel devoted special attention to its large kite shield. St. Demetrios displays it proudly in a manner different from the contemporary miniature mosaic icons of St. Theodore Stratelates at the Hermitage or St. Theodore Tiron in the Vatican.<sup>27</sup> Due to the cost of the lapis lazuli, the shield's deep blue ground studded with bits of gold makes this area among the most expensive in the mosaic. Presently the frame overlaps the right side of the shield. This is not a mistake of the framer; the conservation photograph of the icon without the frame (fig. 11) shows that the original mosaic border also cropped the shield.

Accustomed as we are to the cropping of photographs, this detail might be overlooked, but it is not standard. As a rule, Byzantine art respects the boundaries of a frame as seen in hundreds, if not thousands, of surviving portraits of saints and evangelists. It is a design principle inherited from antiquity. The group of miniature mosaic icons to which the Sassoferrato panel belongs often break this rule, making this feature another hallmark of their artist. For example, the halo and feet of the figures of John the Baptist in the icons of Venice and St. Petersburg<sup>28</sup> break through the ornamental frame of the mosaic, and the halo in the Venice miniature mosaic even extends past the outer edge of the border, requiring an indentation in its frame. The halo of Christ in a damaged Lavra panel similarly extends into the upper border.<sup>29</sup> In other members of the subset, the halo projects only slightly beyond the border.<sup>30</sup>

Of greater consequence for the impact of the design is the projection of key attributes of saints.

23 London Annunciation (Effenberger in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 211; R. Cormack in *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections*, ed. D. Buckton [London, 1994], 203–4, no. 220, with further bibliography); Florence diptych (Effenberger in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 219–20, no. 129); Hermitage St. Theodore Stratelates (Piatnitsky in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 229, no. 136). Also the icons of Christ at S. Maria in Campitelli, Rome (Pedone, "L'icona di Cristo," fig. 3), Galatina (G. M. Falla Castelfranchi in *Splendori di Bisanzio*, 108–9, no. 40), and the monastery of Esphigmenou on Mount Athos (Pedone, "L'icona di Cristo," 111, fig. 14); and John the Baptist in the Hermitage (Y. Piatnitsky in *Sinai Byzantium Russia: Orthodox Art from the Sixth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Y. Piatnitsky, O. Baddeley, E. Brunner, and M. M. Mango [London, 2000], 144, no. B122). All were also grouped together by Bertelli, *Restituzioni*, 152. Three others may be added: St. George in Tbilisi (Pedone, "L'icona di Cristo," fig. 12), Christ blessing at the Lavra Monastery, Mount Athos (Pedone, "L'icona di Cristo," fig. 13), and the Forty Martyrs at Dumbarton Oaks (Boyd in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 224–25, no. 133).

24 Florence diptych, London Annunciation, St. Theodore in the Hermitage and the Vatican, and the Venice John the Baptist.

25 H. Belting, C. Mango, and D. Mouriki, *The Mosaics and Frescoes of St. Mary Pammakaristos (Fethiye Camii) at Istanbul* (Washington, DC, 1978), pl. II.

26 Other figures in the Florence diptych have the same feet, as does the John the Baptist icon of Venice. The elongated foot in profile also appears in the Forty Martyrs icon and the Galatina Christ. Giovanni Morelli, a medical doctor, contributed to the development of art history. He advocated comparing small, incidental details in works of art to discern the hallmarks of individual artists. On Morelli, see C. Ginzburg and A. Davin, "Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method," *History Workshop* 9 (1980): 5–36; and J. Elsner, "Significant Details: Systems, Certainties and the Art-Historian as Detective," *Antiquity* 64 (1990): 950–52. The classic application of the Morellian method to Byzantine art is I. Ševčenko, "The Illuminators of the Menologium of Basil II," *DOP* 16 (1962): 243–76.

27 In general, on Byzantine shields, see M. G. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th–15th Centuries)* (Boston, 2003), 125–30.

28 Furlan, *Icone*, fig. 16.

29 Ibid., fig. 36.

30 Hermitage St. Theodore Stratelates, Vatican St. Theodore Tiron.





Fig. 11.  
Miniature mosaic icon of  
St. Demetrios without frame,  
conservation photograph.  
Photo after Aldrovandi et al.,  
“Indagini scientifiche,” fig. 11.

Besides the shield of the Sassoferrato icon, this includes the tip of the lance, the fingers of the saint's right hand that press against the limit of the mosaic, and the cropped toes of his boots. Because St. Demetrios is larger than the frame, he appears more powerful and monumental, an effective strategy for a small icon. The London Annunciation achieves the same effect more subtly through Mary's footstool and cushion that overlap the border. Gabriel's feet, in contrast, respect the border, thereby making the Theotokos superior to him visually as well as theologically. The best example of this effect is a somewhat later icon, at the Louvre, of St. George energetically slaying a dragon (fig. 12).<sup>31</sup> Its

mosaic frame differs from the group and consists of a white and red band, each four tesserae deep. However, its maker may have learned from the prior master, for George also projects beyond the border: the thumb of his right hand extends into the red band, the spear continues to the outer white border, and the horse's right rear hoof penetrates the frame. These elements together with the long diagonal of George's spear enhance the dynamism of the scene.

The shared Morellian details of these miniature mosaics suggest a common place of origin.<sup>32</sup> Most

31 Effenberger in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 230, no. 137. The dynamism of the Louvre icon compares well with the baptism at the Pammakaristos (Belting, C. Mango, and Mouriki, *Pammakaristos*, pl. V), as well as the fresco of St. George and the dragon at the

cathedral of Genoa, painted by a Constantinopolitan artist, ca. 1312: R. S. Nelson, “A Byzantine Painter in Trecento Genoa: The Last Judgment at S. Lorenzo,” *ArtB* 67.4 (1985): 548–65, at 549; C. Di Fabio, *La cattedrale di Genova nel medioevo* (Genoa, 1998), 271.

32 Piatnitsky has made similar observations: Piatnitsky, Baddeley, Brunner, and M. M. Mango, *Sinai Byzantium Russia*, 144–45. He localizes these icons in Constantinople.





Fig. 12. Miniature mosaic icon of St. George. Paris, Musée du Louvre OA 3110. Diameter 22.0 cm. First quarter of fourteenth century. Photo courtesy of Art Resource.



people have favored production in Constantinople,<sup>33</sup> although Thessaloniki cannot be ruled out.<sup>34</sup> The uniformity of figural style, ornamental detail, and sheer virtuosity of execution in the group point to the work of a single master with assistants, who possibly continued production beyond the master's lifetime. This would explain the inferior quality of other miniature mosaics.<sup>35</sup> At any one time, the number of mosaicists with the dexterity, skill, and eyesight required to make these icons could never have been large, even if magnification were used.<sup>36</sup> The workshop model proposed for late Gothic microwoodcarvings provides an analogy to the Byzantine production, namely one master with assistants working within a limited period.<sup>37</sup>

On the Sassoferrato icon, St. Demetrios does not ride a rearing horse nor stab a dragon, but unlike most images of warrior saints in a similar pose, his lance is

not strictly vertical, making a challenge for the artist as it crosses the square tiles of the floor.<sup>38</sup> St. Demetrios also does not hold his shield in a stable position. His left arm reaches around the shield and grips it by means of an attachment on its back side, thereby displaying the inner side. A moment later, the warrior will reverse the shield and either prepare to do battle with it or rest it on the ground like other warriors.<sup>39</sup> This uncommon manipulation of a shield appears in a contemporary fresco of St. Mercurios at the Protaton at Mount Athos (fig. 13), who brandishes a sword in his right hand, while his other hand grasps cords on the back side of a small round shield. Yet closer to the Sassoferrato icon is a damaged fresco of St. Demetrios at the church of the Holy Apostles in Thessaloniki, where the saint's raised right arm rests on a lance, although he also has slung a bow over his left shoulder.<sup>40</sup> However, all heretofore noted examples of a saint holding a shield in this manner represent the small circular shield. St. Demetrios's long shield, in comparison, would have been awkward to handle in this manner. Perhaps for that reason, kite shields are typically shown resting beside military saints as seen at the twelfth-century church of Nerezi (see below, fig. 17).<sup>41</sup>

Some of these saints bear shields with lions. Shields decorated with animals had a long history in ancient Greece.<sup>42</sup> In the Byzantine period, a lion's head

33 Besides *ibid.*, 145, see Durand in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 232; Gerry in Bagnoli, Klein, Mann, and Robinson, *Treasures of Heaven*, 201; R. Duits, "Una icona pulcra: The Byzantine Icons of Cardinal Pietro Barbo," in *Mantova e il rinascimento italiano: Studi in onore di David S. Chambers*, ed. P. Jackson and G. Rebecchini (Mantua, 2011), 127–42, at 129: "Miniature mosaics are thought of as a courtly art form, produced exclusively in Constantinople. . . ."

34 Origin in Thessaloniki: O. Demus, *Die byzantinischen Mosaikikonen I. Die Grossformatigen Ikonen* (Vienna, 1991), 11; K. Loverdou-Tsigarida, "Thessalonique, centre de production d'objets d'arts au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle," 241–54, 247–48; Vespignani, "Santi militari," 338. The Sassoferrato icon was included in the exhibition of icons of Thessaloniki, but Daskas, the author of the catalogue entry, does not decide between an origin in Constantinople or Thessaloniki: Karagianni, *To Hμέτερον Κάλλος*, 216, no. 115. See also H. Buschhausen, "Zur Frage des Makedonischen Ursprungs von Mosaikikonen," in *Βυζαντινή Μακεδονία 324–1430 μ.Χ.: Διεθνές Συμπόσιο, Θεσσαλονίκη 29–31 Οκτωβρίου* (Thessaloniki, 1995), 57–66, at 64–66. The mosaic icon of St. John at the Lavra Monastery has a strong formal connection with Thessaloniki; see the intriguing study by A. G. Semoglou, "Η ψηφιδωτή εικόνα του αγίου Ιωάννη του Θεολόγου της Ιεράς Μονής Μεγίστης Λαύρας στο Άγιον Όρος: Ένα αυτοκρατορικό επιμνημόσυνο ανάθημα," *Διεθνές επιστημονικό συμπόσιο προς τιμήν του ομότιμου καθηγητή Γεωργίου Βελένη* (Athens, 2021), 541–54.

35 E.g., icons in Vatopedi and Venice (Furlan, *Icone*, figs. 25, 26).

36 While eyeglasses are first attested in Italy in the late Middle Ages, magnification through glass or translucent stones had existed in antiquity. See G. Sines and Y. A. Sakellarakis, "Lenses in Antiquity," *AJA* 91.2 (1987): 191–96; E. Rosen, "The Invention of Eyeglasses," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 11 (1956): 13–46, 183–218.

37 F. Scholten, "The Boxwood Carvers of the Late Gothic Netherlands," in *Small Wonders: Late Gothic Boxwood Microcarvings from the Low Countries*, ed. F. Scholten (Amsterdam, 2016), 13–67.

38 Cf. the late Byzantine steatites of St. Demetrios in the Louvre: I. Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, *Byzantine Icons in Steatite* (Vienna, 1985), 203–4, fig. 130; Durand in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 234–35, nos. 141, 142.

39 Eleventh-century steatite icon of St. George at the Vatopedi Monastery: Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, *Steatite*, fig. 8.

40 The fresco is apparently not published. The same pose is used for St. George at the chapel of St. Euthymios in the church of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki: E. N. Tsigaridas, *Οι τοιχογραφίες του παρεκκλησίου του Αγίου Ευθυμίου (1302/3) στον ναό του Αγίου Δημητρίου: Έργο του Μανουήλ Πανσέληνου στην Θεσσαλονίκη* (Thessaloniki, 2008), 296.

41 On the kite shield, which appears in representations of military saints from the eleventh century, see Grotowski, *Arms and Armour*, 231–34.

42 On shields with lions on Greek pottery, see the still useful study by G. H. Chase, "The Shield Devices of the Greeks," *HSCP* 13 (1902): 112–14. More recent is F. Lissarrague, "Vases grecs: à vos marques," in *Shapes and Uses of Greek Vases (7th–4th Centuries B.C.)*, ed. A. Tsigarida (Brussels, 2009), 237–49; and *idem*, "Corps et armes: figures grecques du guerrier," in *Langages et métaphores du corps dans le monde antique*, ed. V. Dasen and J. Wilgaus (Rennes, 2008), 15–27. On ancient Greek shield blazons more generally, see



Fig. 13.  
Fresco of St. Mercurios,  
Protaton Church,  
Mount Athos. Ca. 1300.  
Photo by author.



in prominent relief marks the center of Goliath's magnificent shield on the largest of the seventh-century David plates (fig. 14).<sup>43</sup> Goliath's shield intimidates, and because it is as massive as the Philistine himself, David's

defeat of Goliath is shown to be yet more miraculous. Otherwise, shields received scant attention in Byzantine art. Most depictions show concentric designs around miscellaneous central devices with no specific meaning, but there are exceptions.

The kite shield of St. George on a well-known thirteenth-century relief icon in Athens has different connotations. Its field has four compartments, colored red or blue in a format seen in Western medieval heraldry of the period, leading some to suggest Western

T. Everson, *Warfare in Ancient Greece: Arms and Armour from the Heroes of Homer to Alexander the Great* (Stroud, UK, 2004), 121 (blazons begin ca. 600 BCE), 162 (the blazon is the choice of the warrior).

43 E. C. Dodd, *Byzantine Silver Stamps* (Washington, DC, 1961), 179.





Fig. 14.

Silver plate of Battle of David and Goliath, detail of Goliath. New York City, Metropolitan Museum of Art 17.190.396. 629–30. Photo © The Metropolitan Museum of Art; courtesy of Art Resource.

personal identity or selfhood involved not distinctive individual traits as today, but resemblance, so that the intention was to represent a person's relation to a larger social group.<sup>45</sup>

Emblematic devices have a similar meaning when they appear on saints' garments, as seen on an unidentified civilian saint in the outer narthex of the church of the Chora in Constantinople from the second decade of the fourteenth century. The saint's cloak is emblazoned with a lattice (fig. 15), an emblem associated with the ruling Palaiologan dynasty and used on liturgical textiles, tombs, manuscripts, sculpture, icon frames, and other objects.<sup>46</sup> The same motif appears in the upper corners of the kite shield of the St. Theodore Stratelates icon in the Hermitage (see above, fig. 10).<sup>47</sup> Close in style and date to the Sassoferato icon, this military saint provides an additional example of a personal device emblazoned on armament. More obvious is the figure of St. Demetrios at the church of the Anastasis of 1335 in Veria (fig. 16).<sup>48</sup> There his small round shield is decorated with a double-headed eagle,

influence.<sup>44</sup> Regardless of its origin, the design must have had personal significance for the patron of the icon, the woman kneeling at the saint's feet. Equipping St. George with a shield bearing an individualized device signifies that the saint will defend her and her family and intercede for them with the Christ depicted in the upper right corner. By this point, the *raison d'être* of the shield has become identity, not intimidation. In Byzantium, as Ivan Drpić has discussed,

44 M. Acheimastou-Potamianou, *Icons of the Byzantine Museum of Athens* (Athens, 1998), 26–28; G. Peers, *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium* (University Park, PA, 2004), 77–99; and now A. Weyl Carr, "The Portrait of a Lady," in *The Eloquence of Art: Essays in Honour of Henry Maguire*, ed. A. Olsen Lam and R. Schroeder (London, 2020), 71–90.

45 I. Drpić, "The Patron's 'I': Art, Selfhood, and the Later Byzantine Dedicatory Epigram," *Speculum* 89.4 (2014): 895–935.

46 R. S. Nelson, "Heavenly Allies at the Chora," *Gesta* 43 (2004): 31–40, at 34–35. More generally on the device, see R. Ousterhout, "Byzantium between East and West and the Origins of Heraldry," in *Byzantine Art: Recent Studies*, ed. C. Hourihane (Tempe, AZ, 2009), 153–70, at 161–64; R. Macrides, J. A. Munitiz, and D. Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos, the Constantinopolitan Court: Offices and Ceremonies* (Burlington, VT, 2013), 45. The latter authors translate the Greek term for this device (*χαρτάριον*) as lattice.

47 See the entries by Piatnitsky in Piatnitsky, Baddeley, Brunner, and M. M. Mango, *Sinai Byzantium Russia*, 145–46, no. B123, and in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 229, no. 136. The diagonal lines appear in the top left corner of the field of the shield and again in the upper right corner, although the latter example is damaged. The lines are white on a blue ground, the reverse of their appearance on a Byzantine tent: Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos*, 44–45.

48 Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, fig. 150; S. Pelekanides, *Καλλιέργεια, ἑλγος Θεταλίας ἄριστος ζωγράφος* (Athens, 1973), pl. 21.



a well-known emblem of the Palaiologan dynasty.<sup>49</sup> Personal names in Byzantium were also inscribed on the clothing and armaments of military saints, the best case being the work of the painters Michael and Eutykhios Astrapas.<sup>50</sup> By the fifteenth century, the association between a depicted shield and patron (or owner) was more common, judging from the kite shield on the back of a small steatite icon of John the Baptist in the Moscow Kremlin, which has the monogram of Thomas Palaiologos, the despot of the Morea, brother of the last Byzantine emperor, and someone who will reappear at the end of this essay.<sup>51</sup>

Representations of Byzantine shields signal personal identity in ways that are less nuanced than the heraldry of Western Europe.<sup>52</sup> The rampant lion on

49 P. Androudis, "Sur quelques emblèmes héraldiques à Constantinople (XIII<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècles)," *Περί Θράκης* 2 (2002): 11–42, at 16–27; A. Babuin, "Standards and Insignia of Byzantium," *Byzantion* 71 (2001): 5–59, at 36–38; R. G. Ousterhout, "Emblems of Power in Palaiologan Constantinople," in *The Byzantine Court: Source of Power and Culture*, ed. A. Ödelam, N. Necipoğlu, and E. Akyürek (Istanbul, 2013), 89–94, at 93; Ousterhout, "Byzantium between East and West," 153, 159–61; S. Cagaptay, "On the Wings of the Double-Headed Eagle: *Spolia In Re* and Appropriation in Medieval Anatolia and Beyond," in *Spolia Reincarnated: Second Life of Spaces, Materials, Objects in Anatolia from Antiquity to the Ottoman Period*, ed. S. Yalman and I. Jevtić (Istanbul, 2018), 309–38.

50 See M. Marković, "Michael's and Eutykhios' Artistic Work: Present Knowledge, Dubious Issues and Direction of Future Research," *Zbornik Narodnog muzeja* 17 (2004): 95–117. Michael Astrapas wrote his name on the sword of St. Mercurios at the church of the Virgin Peribleptos at Ohrid in 1295 (*ibid.*, fig. 1a) and on the cloak of St. Demetrios (I. Drpić, "Painter as Scribe: Artistic Identity and the Arts of Graphē in Late Byzantium," *Word & Image* 29.3 [2013]: 334–53, at 335–36, fig. 5). K. M. Vafeiadis has reported that the name of Michael Astrapas appears beneath St. Mercurios at the church of the Protaton on Mount Athos: "The Mural Paintings of the Church of the Protaton: Research Issues Following Their Conservation," in *Abstracts of Speakers: For Scientific One-Day The Protaton Church and Its Painter: Conservation Works and New Data and For the Second International Scientific Workshop of the Mount Athos Center* (Thessaloniki, 2017).

51 I. A. Sterligova, *Byzantine Antiquities: Works of Art from the Fourth to Fifteenth Centuries in the Collection of the Moscow Kremlin Museums* (Moscow, 2013), 294–97. The eleventh-century steatite icon of St. Theodore Stratelates in the Vatican has a coat of arms on his shield, but this is likely to be the ownership mark of a later Western European noble: A. Weyl Carr, *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261*, ed. H. C. Evans and W. D. Wixom (New York, 1997), 157–58, no. 104.

52 Armorial devices appear frequently on military panoply in Western Europe during the Middle Ages, e.g., the Butler Hours, an



Fig. 15. Unidentified saint, Church of the Chora, Constantinople. Ca. 1320. Photo courtesy of the Byzantine Institute and Dumbarton Oaks Fieldwork Records and Papers; Dumbarton Oaks, Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives KC.BIA.0787.

the kite shield of St. Theodore Tiron at the church of St. Panteleion at Nerezi (fig. 17) could be yet another intimidating beast or the personal emblem of the

English manuscript of the mid-fourteenth century, and the Luttrell Hours of ca. 1350: M. Camille, *Mirror in Parchment: The Luttrell Psalter and the Making of Medieval England* (London, 1998), 51–52, 56, 134–35. The practice in Byzantium, ca. 1300, has more in common with contemporary Italy in the period before the adoption of stable familial devices. See D'A. J. D. Boulton, "Insignia of Power: The Use of Heraldic and Paraheraldic Devices by Italian Princes, ca. 1350–1500," in *Art and Politics in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Italy, 1250–1500*, ed. C. M. Rosenberg (Notre Dame, IN, 1990), 103–27, at 103–8. What Boulton after M. Pastoureau characterizes as "paraheraldic devices" describe the unsystematized and unstable nature of Byzantine emblems in the early Palaiologan period, but further work is needed on the Byzantine material.





Fig. 16. St. Demetrios, Church of the Anastasis, Veria. 1315. Photo after Pelekanides, *Καλλιέργης, δλης Θετταλίας ἄριστος ζωγράφος*, pl. 21.



Fig. 17. St. Theodore Tiron, Church of St. Panteleion, Nerezi. 1164. Photo by author.





Fig. 18. St. Theodore Stratelates, Monastery of Sopoćani. Ca. 1260. Photo by author.

bearer. Supporting the latter possibility are SS. Nestor and Theodore Stratelates at the church, for their shields are divided into sections of different colors similar to the icon of St. George in Athens.<sup>53</sup> Near life-size, these holy warriors stand just above ground level, putting their shields at the viewer's waist or chest. Similarly positioned is the shield of St. Theodore Stratelates at Sopoćani (fig. 18). His shield bears a curious lion with a face that resembles the Cowardly Lion in the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*.

Although the lion is the most common animal depicted in Western medieval heraldry,<sup>54</sup> it is seldom represented on Byzantine shields. The David plate, the frescoes of Nerezi and Sopoćani, and the icon at Sassoferrato are the only examples so far noted with the lion, or any other animal, on a shield. However, there is one important difference between the icon and the other examples: the position of the device on the shield. Only the miniature mosaic places the lion on the interior of the shield, a side normally left bare or given minimal embellishment as on the round shields decorated with concentric circles of St. Mercurios or Procopius at Nerezi.<sup>55</sup> A partial exception is the reverse of St. Mercurios's round shield at the Protaton (fig. 13). Although nothing appears in its field, the perimeter imitates floriated Kufic script, which by this period had become a decorative device; that is, decorative in the sense that the script is devoid of semantic meaning.<sup>56</sup> Once again, the singularity of the Sassoferrato shield is apparent.

As a personal device, the rampant lion appears in the late Byzantine period in other contexts.<sup>57</sup> Contemporary with the Sassoferrato icon and associated with Emperor Andronikos II is a relief of a

53 D. Bardzieva Trajkovska, *Sv. Pantelejmon Nerezi: Zhirovic* (Skopje, 2004), figs. 46, 52 in color; I. Sinkević, *The Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi: Architecture, Programme, Patronage* (Wiesbaden, 2000), figs. 61, 62 in black and white.

54 M. Pastoureaux, *L'art héraldique au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 2009), 99.

55 Bardzieva Trajkovska, *Sv. Pantelejmon Nerezi*, fig. 52; Sinkević, *Church of St. Panteleimon*, fig. 60. The former identifies this saint as St. Mercurios, the latter as St. Prokopios.

56 Pseudo-Greek script also circles the inner rim of the shield of St. Nestor at the contemporary church of the Virgin Peribleptos at Ohrid, painted by the same atelier as the Protaton: Drpić, "Painter as Scribe," 346–47, fig. 24.

57 See in general Androudis, "Sur quelques emblèmes héraldiques," 31–33.



crowned lion with sword that once was displayed on the Constantinopolitan sea walls at Kumkapı in Istanbul.<sup>58</sup> Rampant lions from the same period also appear on gold signet rings, objects whose sole function is personal identity,<sup>59</sup> even if it is generally not possible to ascertain the specific referent of a rampant lion without further information. Palaiologan Byzantium did not create a system of personal coats of arms comparable to what prevailed in Western Europe from the twelfth century, and it has been judged negatively as a result, the tacit assumption being that Western heraldry is the proper standard in such matters. However, the fact that Byzantine emblems functioned differently from late medieval Western heraldry does not mean that Eastern practices were without significance.

In Byzantium, the lion and other devices are better described as badges or emblems that were not exclusive to individuals or families. Michael Pastoureau termed such looser associations *paraheraldry*.<sup>60</sup> Closer analogies to Byzantine practices are found not in France or England—the epicenters of heraldry—but late medieval Italy, which was slower to embrace transalpine practices. Italian aristocratic families employed various devices that “were not characterized by exclusiveness, stability, or even a single pattern of use.”<sup>61</sup> Badges could be adopted and passed to heirs or used only briefly and then abandoned. Paraheraldic badges in Italy sometimes functioned with coats of arms to create an exclusive referent. To achieve similar specificity in Byzantium, badges or devices required verbal accompaniment, specifically a monogram in the examples studied by Robert

Ousterhout.<sup>62</sup> The aforementioned shield with a monogram on the back of a fifteenth-century icon of John the Baptist in the Moscow Kremlin merged the eastern and western systems.

## Patron

The best documented examples of the rampant lion are the roundels in the cornice of the funerary chapel for the family of the protostrator Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotos at the Pammakaristos church in Constantinople (fig. 19). Glabas had long patronized the church and erected its parekklesion between 1302/3 and his death in 1305/8. Shortly after he died, his widow added mosaics.<sup>63</sup> Beneath the latter is a marble frieze of rampant lions that Cyril Mango first suggested might be a family blazon.<sup>64</sup> Although such a frieze of rampant lions is unprecedented, its placement informs its meaning, for above it is an epigram painted in gold letters on a marble cornice. Although fragmentary, enough survives to indicate that it constituted a prayer to God on behalf of the deceased Glabas, presumably by his widow.<sup>65</sup> Like ribbons around a present, text and

62 Ousterhout, “Emblems of Power,” 92–97.

63 On Michael Doukas Glabas Tarchaneiotos, see I. G. Leontiades, *Die Tarchaneiotai: Eine prosopographisch-sigillographische Studie* (Thessaloniki, 1998), 69–72, and *PLP*, fasc. 11 (Vienna, 1991), no. 27504. On Michael’s patronage of the monastery and the dating of the project, see A. Effenberger, “Zur Restaurierungstätigkeit des Michael Dukas Glabas Tarchaneiotos im Pammakaristokloster und zur Erbauungszeit des Parekklesions,” *Zograf* 31 (2006–7): 79–94.

64 C. Mango in Belting, C. Mango, and Mouriki, *Pammakaristos*, 22. Androudis, who has made detailed studies of late Byzantine emblems, asserts more strongly that this is the family device of the Glabas family: “Sur quelques emblèmes héraldiques,” 31. Dennert rejected the patron proposed here, argued that the frame was contemporary with the mosaic, and questioned any connection with the Pammakaristos frieze: “If we take heraldry seriously, we see there a red lion going to the right, not a white lion going to the left as on our icon. Therefore, there is no plausible connection” (“Displaying an Icon,” 45). I doubt that Byzantine heraldry ca. 1300 had developed this specificity and instead remained paraheraldry. Putting the color red on the expensive lapis lazuli ground of the icon would not have been nearly as effective as white, and the lions of the cornice turn right and left, although the former direction dominates (Belting, C. Mango, and Mouriki, *Pammakaristos*, fig. 95a).

65 Πρὶν μὲν βασιλεὺς ὁ κρατῶν γῆς Αὐσόνω[ν].  
[ὦ] τὸ στέ[φ]ος δέδωκας αὐτὸς ὑψόθεν  
καὶ Σολομώντος [. . .]  
τιμαῖς ἐδέξιούτο τὸν σὸν οἰκέτην

58 C. G. Curtis, *Broken Bits of Byzantium* (n.p., 1891), fig. 34; A. Van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople* (London, 1899), 189–90; D. Heher, “Julianhafen—Sophienhafen—Kontoskalion,” in *Die byzantinischen Häfen Konstantinopels*, ed. F. Daim (Mainz, 2016), 61. According to C. Mango, another crowned rampant lion, now in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul, was found on the walls of the Golden Horn: C. Mango in Belting, C. Mango, and Mouriki, *Pammakaristos*, 22, n. 99.

59 E. Katsara in *The City of Mystras: Mystras, August 2001–January 2002*, ed. D. Evegenidou (Athens, 2001), 162–63; J. Spier, *Late Byzantine Rings, 1204–1453* (Wiesbaden, 2013), 45–46; Bauer, *Stadt und ihr Patron*, 457, 460.

60 M. Pastoureau, “Aux origines de l’emblème: La crise de l’héraldique européenne aux XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *L’Hermine et le Sinople* (Paris, 1982), 327–33.

61 Boulton, “Insignia of Power,” 107.





Fig. 19. Parekklesion and cornice, Church of the Virgin Pammakaristos, Istanbul. Early fourteenth century. Photo by R. Ousterhout.

blazons tie together the building, the decoration, the patrons on behalf of the family members buried there (including the protostrator), and those who visited their tombs.<sup>66</sup> Like other Palaiologan paraheraldry, the rampant lion is not unique to the Glabas, and its reference to him has been questioned.<sup>67</sup> Yet it can only refer to the patron's family because of its context and verbal accompaniment, the cornice epigram, in the manner of monograms and emblems in Palaiologan heraldry more generally. Put another way, just because the rampant lion was not unique to Glabas does not mean that the device was not important to him. The size and placement of the lion frieze argues for its symbolic significance.

Soldier and diplomat, Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotēs was a man of culture and learning. He enlisted

στρατηγικ[αῖς . . .]  
αὐτὸς δὲ καὶ νῦν ὡς Θεὸς πάντων μόνος,  
ὦ Σῶτερ, ὦ φῶς, ὦ γλυκασμέ, Δεσπότη,  
τιμαῖς ἀ[μ]είβου τοῦτον ὀλβιωτέραις  
τὴν πίστιν ἀθρῶν κ[αὶ τ]ὸν ἐνθεον δόμον  
ὃν ἀντίλεπτῶ[ν . . .]

Transcribed and translated by A. H. S. Megaw, "Notes on Recent Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul," *DOP* 17 (1963): 370–71; and by I. Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion in Later Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2016), 206.

66 Drpić sensitively analyzes the content and placement of the epigrammatic inscriptions in *Epigram*, 202–15.

67 Ousterhout, "Byzantium between East and West," 157–59; idem, "Emblems of Power," 92–93.

the prolific poet Manuel Philes to compose verses for him, and from these we learn that Glabas also commissioned an icon of the archangel Michael with a gilded silver frame and an icon of John the Baptist in fine or delicate mosaic, that is, a miniature mosaic (cf. fig. 7). Neither has been identified.<sup>68</sup> Glabas's military career advanced steadily, culminating in his appointment by Andronikos II to be the governor of the western provinces residing in Thessaloniki.<sup>69</sup> There in 1302/3, he and his wife, Maria, decorated a small basilical chapel dedicated to St. Euthymios and attached to the end of the much larger early Byzantine basilica of

68 E. Miller, ed., *Manuelis Philae Carmina: Ex codicibus Escorialensibus, Florentinis, Parisinis et Vaticanis*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1855), 36, no. 82, and 79–80, no. 170. The first poem has little information to link it to a specific icon. The second poem on the miniature mosaic is more promising. The general accounting of mosaic icons by Furlan (*Icones*, 37–38, 62, 86) lists miniature mosaic icons of John the Baptist at the Eucumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul (eleventh century), the Hermitage (ca. 1300), and the treasury of S. Marco, Venice (ca. 1300). The Hermitage Baptist was formerly thought to be the prophet Samuel, but Piatnitsky has now correctly identified it (Piatnitsky in Piatnitsky, Baddeley, Brunner, and M. M. Mango, *Sinai Byzantium Russia*, 143–45). The icon in Istanbul is too early, but the Baptist at S. Marco is probably from ca. 1300, contrary to Furlan (*Icones*, 86). It is the best candidate for Glabas's icon. However, it is devoid of any indication of its patron, and Philes's poem may have been intended for an icon frame.

69 C. Mango in Belting, C. Mango, and Mouriki, *Pammakaristos*, 11–14. Glabas's career was depicted in a cycle of paintings somewhere in the Pammakaristos complex.





Fig. 20.  
St. Demetrios, Chapel of St. Euthymios,  
Church of St. Demetrios, Thessaloniki.  
1303. Photo by author.

St. Demetrios.<sup>70</sup> At the end of the chapel, the pillars of the templon screen depict SS. Demetrios (fig. 20) and Euthymios, the dedicatees of the church and chapel. As expected, Demetrios has the more privileged position at stage right.<sup>71</sup> Dressed as a soldier with armor similar to the Sassoferatto figure, Demetrios holds a sword vertically and rests a shield at his side. Many images of the saint appear elsewhere at the basilica dedicated to him, but this is the only one in which he is portrayed as a warrior, the patron's profession. Besides being the governor of the city, Glabas by then had reached the rank of protostrator, the second highest military officer in the empire. After he died a few years later, he was buried in his elegant chapel at the Pammakaristos in Constantinople.

To understand how the Sassoferatto icon and its lion contributed to this patronage matrix around 1300, we need to review what we have learned so far. The icon portrays Demetrios reversing his shield, an uncommon pose for a military saint. Rarer still, indeed unique, is the representation of a device on the shield's inner side. Such emblems typically intimidate opponents or express identity. To frighten his foe, Goliath's shield has a lion on its exterior. Why then is the lion on the inside of the shield of St. Demetrios, where it would neither frighten nor identify the bearer?

The logic of this miniature mosaic required a beholder who venerated icons and understood shields as armor and metaphor. Like all icons, this one facilitated prayer to the saint, but only some beholders would have empathized with St. Demetrios in military dress and would have been skilled in the use of a shield in

70 Bauer, *Stadt und ihr Patron*, 430, fig. 30. According to M. Marković, Glabas also founded the monastery of the Virgin Treskavac: M. Marković, "Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotes—the *Ktetor* of the Treskavac Monastery," *Zograf* 38 (2014): 77–98.

71 On the chapel, see Bauer, *Stadt und ihr Patron*, 426–31; M. A. Rossi, "The Miracle Cycle between Constantinople, Thessalonike, and Mistra," in *From Constantinople to the Frontier: The City and the Cities*, ed. N. S. M. Matheou, T. Kampianaki, and L. M. Bondioli (Boston, 2016), 226–40, at 230–40. The best images are in Tsigaridas, *Τοιχογραφίες*, figs. 42, 131.



combat. When a warrior prepared for battle, he grasped the cords on the back of his shield. Holding the shield before him to fight, only he and perhaps his compatriots would see what was on the inside. St. Demetrios was invincible by definition. He and his shield protected the emblematic lion, the surrogate of the family of Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotēs. In so doing, the shield performs like those mentioned in the Bible that act as a metaphor for God or faith in God;<sup>72</sup> thus Paul advises the people of Ephesos to “put on the whole armor of God . . . the shield of faith.”<sup>73</sup>

When St. Demetrios went into battle with his shield, he would have the rampant lion close to his heart, much in the manner of encolpia, the small personal devotional aids that believers hung around their necks, some of which portrayed military saints.<sup>74</sup> Byzantines literally did not leave home without their encolpia and thought of them as shields, military breastplates, fortresses or, in sum, infallible safeguards.<sup>75</sup> On the Sassoferrato icon, the saint with his shield fought with and for the lion and thereby symbolically the person to whom the device refers, just as St. Theodore Stratelates on the Hermitage panel or St. Demetrios at Veria defended their patrons, the imperial family. The Sassoferrato and Hermitage icons of military saints

are small,  $24.3 \times 16$  cm and  $9 \times 7.4$  cm respectively, and thus easily portable for peripatetic patrons, such as the general Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotēs. For the Sassoferrato icon, the person that best fits its style, date, iconography, and provenance is that protostrator. The lion and the cult of St. Demetrios held special significance for him, specifically the saint as warrior, since he had Demetrios thus portrayed in the chapel that he and Maria added to the saint’s church in Thessaloniki.

In the most recent study of the icon, Dennert has argued, in contrast, that the patron was Demetrios Palaiologos, because he had a special relation to his name saint, connections with Thessaloniki, and an encolpion with myron.<sup>76</sup> Demetrios commissioned an illustrated Menologion now in Oxford that pays special attention to St. Demetrios. Irmgard Hutter dates it to ca. 1330–35.<sup>77</sup> However, Demetrios Palaiologos (ca. 1296–1344) was three generations younger than Glabas (ca. 1235–1305/8).<sup>78</sup> The <sup>14</sup>C dating of the wood of the icon and its seasoning places it no later than 1313, when Demetrios was still a boy and at least two decades before the Menologion. Finally, Dennert regarded the icon’s frame to be contemporary with the miniature mosaic and thought that its Palaiologan double-headed eagles referred to Demetrios Palaiologos, but the next section will instead argue that the emblem had a different referent.

## Frame

If the mosaic has certain unique aspects, it is no match for the icon’s frame. While the later addition of a highly ornamented frame was a well-established practice in Byzantium from the twelfth century,<sup>79</sup> there are no similar Byzantine or post-Byzantine frames. A wide range of opinion exists as to its date, even among

72 Gen. 15:1: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield”; Ps. 5:12: “For you bless the righteous, O Lord, you cover him with favor as in a shield”; Prov. 30:5: “Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.”

73 Eph. 6:10–16.

74 B. Pitarakis, “Objects of Devotion and Protection,” in *Byzantine Christianity*, ed. D. Krueger (Minneapolis, 2006), 164–81, at 177, fig. 8.9; Y. Ikonomaki-Papadopoulos, B. Pitarakis, K. Loverdou-Tsagarida, *Enkolpia: The Holy and Great Monastery of Vatopaidi* (Mount Athos, 2001), 44–45, 106–9, 114–15, 128–33.

75 As discussed in the important articles of I. Drpić: “The Enkolpion: Object, Agency, Self,” *Gesta* 57.2 (2018): 197–224, at 202–3, 214; “Short Texts on Small Objects: The Poetics of the Byzantine Enkolpion,” in *Inscribing Texts in Byzantium, Continuities and Transformations: Papers from the Forty-Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. M. D. Lauxtermann and I. Toth (New York, 2020), 309–34. For embodied objects generally, see M. Gaifman and V. Platt, “Introduction: From Grecian Urn to Embodied Object,” *AH* 41.3, *Special Issue: The Embodied Object in Classical Antiquity* (2018): 402–19; and on the literature on the agency of objects: A. Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (New York, 1986); A. Gell, “The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology,” in *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, ed. J. Coote and A. Shelton (New York, 1992), 40–63; J. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, 2010).

76 Dennert, “Displaying an Icon,” 48–50.

77 I. Hutter, *El Menologio de Oxford* (ms. Gr. th. f. 1, Bodleian Library, Oxford) (Madrid, 2006), 170.

78 C. Mango in Belting, C. Mango, and Mouriki, *Pammakaristos*, 11–15; Effenberger, “Zur Restaurierungstätigkeit,” 91.

79 I. Drpić, “CHRYSEPES STICHOURGIA: The Byzantine Epigram as Aesthetic Object,” in *Sign and Design: Script as Image in Cross-Cultural Perspective (300–1600 CE)*, ed. B. M. Bedos-Rezak and J. F. Hamburger (Washington, DC, 2016), 51–70, at 57; idem, *Epigram*, 118–85.



the majority of scholars, who regard it as later.<sup>80</sup> Few, however, have studied the frame in itself and for what it contributes to the icon. The present frame was the icon's first. From the photograph of the icon with the frame removed (fig. 11), Dennert aptly observed that all the attachment holes belong to the present frame.<sup>81</sup> Hence, there was no earlier frame, and its devices and inscriptions were made for it and cannot copy those of an earlier frame.

In the upper border, a lead ampoule bearing the features of St. Demetrios on the front and St. Theodora on the reverse anchors the vertical axis of the icon. Flanking the ampoule are the letters IC XC / N[I] KA (Jesus Christ conquers), words that had appeared in military and religious contexts from the walls of Constantinople to the backs of precious ivories.<sup>82</sup> At the corners of the upper frame, betas are written normally and reversed in the quadrants of a cross. The letters are an acronym that plays on the words for ruler and rule that begin with beta: βασιλεὺς βασιλέων βασιτελεύων βασιλεύουσι or "ruler of rulers, ruling over those who rule." The translation continues the alliteration but does not suggest the semantic richness of βασιλεὺς, a Biblical term, as well as a part of the Byzantine emperor's titlature since the time of Heraclius.<sup>83</sup> The beta cross appeared on imperial coinage and was generally popular in late Byzantium, symbolic compensation perhaps for

declining imperial authority, although, to be sure, the ruler in question is Christ.<sup>84</sup> In the lower border, a central oval now frames bare wood; something is missing here. Flanking the oval is the word ΑΓΙΟΣ (holy), and at the lower corners of the frame are double-headed eagles with crowns, an emblem of the Palaiologan family and the empire more generally.<sup>85</sup> A Greek majuscule inscription arranged in chevrons fills the right side of the frame. The left side shows only the reddish wood of the supporting panel. Something has also been removed here.

The icon was stolen in 1894, and when recovered the next year, it had lost the left border of the frame, a cameo or gem that had filled the oval in the lower border, ten rubies set in gold on the outer edge of the frame, the gold covering of the ampoule with its inscription, TO ΑΓΙΟΝ ΜΥΡΟΝ (the holy myron), and the ampoule's sapphire cap. The original decoration can be reconstructed from the 1774 account of the Enlightenment scholar and professor of Greek at the Vatican, Giovanni Cristoforo Amaduzzi, who included a sketch of the icon (fig. 21) that focused on the inscriptions,<sup>86</sup> and from a published pre-theft photograph (fig. 22).<sup>87</sup> Between the word ΑΓΙΟΣ in the bottom section of the frame, the photograph shows a figure holding a cross.<sup>88</sup>

The frame's lateral inscriptions are the expected place to begin the examination, but their analysis must be reserved for later because the form, format, and context of the inscriptions are as important to their meaning as their content.<sup>89</sup> Instead, the general context and

80 Fifteenth-century date of the frame: Durand in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 232–33; Gerry in Bagnoli, Klein, Mann, and Robinson, *Treasures of Heaven*, 201; Daskas in Karagianni, *To Ημέτερον Κάλλος*, 216. Sixteenth-century date: D. Charalambous-Mouriki in *Byzantine Art: A European Art* (Athens, 1964), 238; W. F. Volbach in W. F. Volbach and J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Byzanz und der Christliche Osten*, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte 3 (Berlin, 1968), 181. Seventeenth-century date: Theochari, "Ψηφιδωτή εικόν," 516–17. There is a large literature on icon frames. See, for example, A. Grabar, *Les revêtements en or et en argent des icônes byzantines du moyen âge* (Venice, 1975), who does not include the Sassoferrato icon; A. Weyl Carr, "Donors in the Frames of Icons: Living in the Borders of Byzantine Art," *Gesta* 45.2 (2006): 189–98; J. Durand, "Precious Metal Icon Revetments," in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 243–51; Peers, *Sacred Shock*, 101–31; Drpić, *Epigram*, 118–85; and now J. Durand, "Freisinger Ikone und die Metallverkleidungen der byzantinischen Ikonen zur Zeit der Palaiologen," in *Das Freisinger Lukasbild: Eine byzantinische Ikone und ihre tausendjährige Geschichte* (Paderborn, 2019), 121–31.

81 Dennert, "Displaying an Icon," 45.

82 Van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople*, 183; A. Cutler, *The Hand of the Master: Craftsmanship, Ivory, and Society in Byzantium (9th–11th Centuries)* (Princeton, 1994), figs. 110, 152, 239, 242.

83 M. McCormick and A. Kazhdan, "Basileus," *ODB* 1:264.

84 C. Sathas, "Sur les quatre B, Lettre à M. Schlumberger," *RA* n.s. 33 (1877): 92–101; Babuin, "Standards and Insignia," 38–40; Ousterhout, "Emblems of Power," 93; Androudis, "Sur quelques emblèmes héraldiques," 27–30.

85 See n. 49.

86 See n. 8.

87 Bauer, *Stadt und ihr Patron*, 456. Bettini's article published the same photograph but printed it lighter than the image in Bauer's book, thus showing more detail: S. Bettini, "Appunti per lo studio dei mosaici portatili bizantini," *FR* 46 (1938): 7–39, at 19, fig. 9. The next year he republished the photograph in idem, *La pittura bizantina*, vol. 2, *I mosaici*, part 2 (Florence, 1939), 29.

88 A pre-theft account mentions a saint here: R. Cecchetelli Ippoliti, "I reliquiari perottiani di Sassoferrato," *Nuova rivista misena: Periodico marchigiano d'erudizione storico-artistica di letteratura e d'interessi locali* 5.2 (1892): 19–29, at 23.

89 A. Eastmond describes this problem more generally in "Monograms and the Art of Unhelpful Writing in Late Antiquity," in Bedos-Rezak and Hamburger, *Sign and Design*, 219–35, esp. 221. A



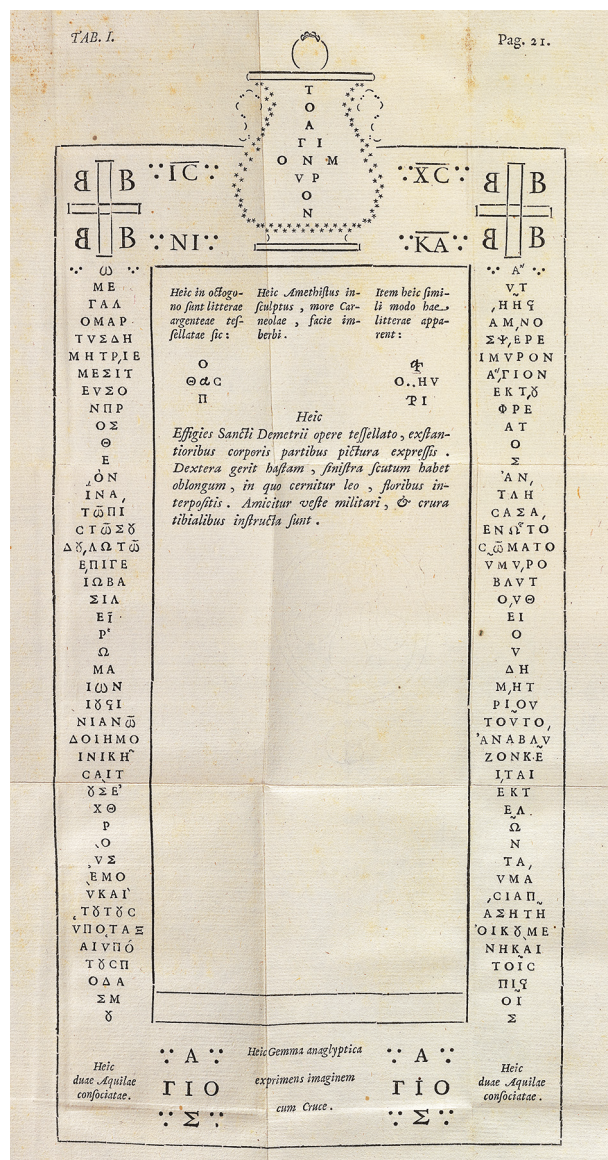


Fig. 21. Sassoferatto icon. Drawing from Amaduzzi and Bianconi, *Anecdota litteraria*, vol. 3, tab. 1.

pioneering investigation of the broader semiotic meanings of writing is I. A. Bierman, *Writing Signs: The Fatimid Public Text* (Berkeley, 1998). There she explores various meanings of writing, including what she calls its “aesthetic function”: “When writing could not be read—and even when it could—its color, materiality, and form were prominent aspects of communication” (ibid., 20). I. C. Schick continues that perspective in “The Content of Form: Islamic Calligraphy between Text and Representation,” in Bedos-Rezak and Hamburger, *Sign and Design*, 173–94. He concludes: “Form and content mutually infect each other, and the only way to truly appreciate Islamic calligraphy is to look at it as standing between script



Fig. 22. Miniature mosaic icon of St. Demetrios, pre-theft photograph. Sassoferatto, Museo Civico. Photo after Bettini, “Appunti per lo studio,” fig. 9.

the date of the frame need to be established through other details, some of which are not Byzantine. The wing feathers of the double-headed imperial eagles in the corners of the lower border (fig. 23) are too gracefully curvilinear and naturalistic for Byzantine metalwork of ca. 1300 and find a better match in the treatment of human hair on fifteenth-century Italian medals or in the feathers of the double-headed eagle on the reverse of a medal of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III (1415–1493, fig. 24). The latter, an abraded specimen that has been termed “a wreck,” has been thought to be a later copy of one made in Italy when

and image, between text and representation” (ibid., 194). The differences between Greek and Arabic inscriptions in these respects is a subject for another study. As for the meaning of inscriptions, they also are not transparent, as Drpić explains: *Epigram*, 186–243.





Fig. 23. Miniature mosaic icon of St. Demetrios, detail of the frame, lower right corner. Photo by author; courtesy of the Comune di Sassoferrato.



Fig. 24.  
Reverse of medal of  
Holy Roman Emperor  
Frederick III. Mid-fifteenth  
century. 10.2 cm. Photo  
by J. Kramer; courtesy  
of the Münzkabinett,  
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.



Fig. 25.  
Double-headed eagle  
and Palaiologan  
monogram, tower on  
island of Samothrace.  
1433. Photo by  
R. Ousterhout.



Frederick visited there in 1452 or 1468–69.<sup>90</sup> The eagles on the medal and the icon frame can be contrasted with the more abstract and rigid eagle on a Byzantine relief from 1433 (fig. 25). Furthermore, in Byzantine art, the upper border's inscription, IC XC NI KA, never accompanies an ampoule, but by long tradition, these words flank a victory-bringing cross.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, late Byzantine icon frames do not typically display imperial emblems to this extent and instead alternate geometric interlace or floral ornament with narrative scenes or

portraits of saints.<sup>92</sup> Finally, Byzantine frames arranged inscriptions in rectangular text blocks instead of the icon's lozenges (fig. 26).<sup>93</sup> The latter were a deliberate aesthetic choice used also for the inscription on the gold ampoule and the word ΑΓΙΟΣ in the lower border.

Thus, the icon remained unframed for many years, even though the Byzantine artist executed the mosaic on a wood panel suited for a broad frame similar to that of the icon of John the Baptist in Venice.<sup>94</sup> But it was not unusual in this respect. A number of miniature mosaic icons originally had bare wood frames and metal coverings added later.<sup>95</sup> Did the original state of

90 For medallion portraits see G. F. Hill, *Medals of the Renaissance* (Oxford, 1920), pl. 14. About the medals of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, see G. F. Hill, *A Corpus of Italian Medals of the Renaissance before Cellini*, 2 vols. (London, 1930, reprinted Florence, 1984), 1:293, vol. 2, pl. 187. The double-headed eagle in fifteenth-century Italy would be an example of paraheraldry because it was associated with the Byzantine and the Holy Roman emperors. Its referent depended upon its context of use, but this is not to say that it was without meaning.

91 R. S. Nelson, "'And So, With the Help of God': The Byzantine Art of War in the Tenth Century," *DOP* 65–66 (2011–12): 169–92, at 178–86; C. Walter, "IC XC NI KA: The Apotropaic Function of the Victorious Cross," *REB* 55 (1997): 193–220; A. Rhoby, "Secret Messages? Byzantine Greek Tetragrams and Their Display," *In-Scriptio: Revue en ligne d'études épigraphiques* (17 November 2017), <https://in-scriptio.edel.univ-poitiers.fr/index.php?id=180>.

92 Contemporary examples of original Byzantine frames are the icon of SS. Anna and Mary at Vatopedi and that of John the Baptist in the treasury of S. Marco, Venice. For the former, see Y. Piatnitsky, "The Portable Mosaic Icons from Vatopedi, Mount Athos," *The Monastery of Vatopedi: History and Art, Athonika Symmeikta* 7 (Athens, 1999), fig. 6; Furlan, *Icone*, 86.

93 Cf. the dedicatory verses in the Freising icon: A. Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme in inschriftlicher Überlieferung*, vol. 2, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst* (Vienna, 2010), 64–68, pl. 7.

94 Grabar, *Revêtements*, 53, 60, figs. 66, 67, 71, 73, 99. For an assessment of the contents of the frames of Byzantine miniature mosaics, see O. Demus, "Two Palaeologan Mosaic Icons in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection," *DOP* 14 (1960): 87–119, at 92–93.

95 For bare wood frames, see R. S. Nelson and K. M. Collins, *Icons from Sinai: Holy Image Hallowed Ground* (Los Angeles, 2006),





Fig. 26. Frame of the miniature mosaic icon of St. Demetrios, detail of right inscription. Photo by author; courtesy of the Comune di Sassoferrato.

the icon in ca. 1300 include the lead ampoule? Durand thought not and considered the vial to be a Renaissance addition because “the unique arrangement of the ampulla attached to a frame [is] obviously too small for it.”<sup>96</sup> For Byzantium, the incorporation of a vial in an icon is indeed unique, and late medieval icons with relics of any sort are not common.<sup>97</sup> The other miniature mosaics that later received relics support Durand’s argument.<sup>98</sup>

In contrast to the paucity of relics on Byzantine icons, Italian panels with relics are more common,<sup>99</sup> and other Byzantine mosaic icons later received frames with relics.<sup>100</sup> However, neither Byzantine icons nor Italian panels display an ampoule, and with exception of Dennert, other commentators regarded it as a later addition.<sup>101</sup> If the ampoule were part of an original Byzantine frame, it would not have been covered

140–43; Furlan, *Icone*, figs. 8, 9, 31, 32, 37, 40. For metal coverings, see Furlan, *Icone*, figs. 13, 29, 30, 38.

96 Durand in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 233, no. 139.

97 I. Rapti, “Images du Christ, Reliques des saints: Un triptyque géorgien inédit,” in *Byzance et les reliques du Christ*, ed. J. Durand and B. Flusin (Paris, 2004), 191–222, at 217–21. The two best-known examples of icons with relics are in Meteora and Cuenca, for which see L. Deriziotis and A. Weyl Carr in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 51–53; A. Babuin, “Il dittico di Cuenca e l’Epiro in epoca tardo-medievale,” in *Byzantine Hagiography: Texts, Themes and Projects*, ed. A. Rigo (Turnhout, 2018), 419–49. On Patmos icons with relics, see n. 4.

98 Piatnitsky in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 225–27, no. 134; Buschhausen, “Zur Frage des Makedonischen Ursprungs,” 59; E. Pizzoli, “Da Roma a Berlino: Il viaggio di un'icona musiva,” *Proceedings of the 22nd International Congress of Byzantine Studies: Sofia, 22–27 August 2011*, vol. 3 (Sofia, 2011), 360.

99 See the many Italian examples in D. Preising, “Bild und Reliquie: Gestalt und Funktion gotischer Reliquientafeln und -altären,” *Aachener Kunstblätter* 61 (1995–97): 13–84; and N. Zchomelidse, “Liminal Phenomena: Framing Medieval Cult Images with Relics and Words,” *Viator* 47.3 (2016): 243–96, a reference I owe to Christopher Platts. Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga owned a small icon of gold with relics: D. S. Chambers, *A Renaissance Cardinal and His Worldly Goods: The Will and Inventory of Francesco Gonzaga (1444–1483)* (London, 1992), 147.

100 E.g., icon of Christ at S. Maria in Campitelli (Pedone, “L’icona de Cristo,” 103); Man of Sorrows icon at S. Croce in Gerusalemme, Rome (Evans, *Faith and Power*, 221–23, no. 131); icon of four saints in the Hermitage (Piatnitsky in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 225–27, no. 134); Crucifixion icon in Berlin (Buschhausen, “Zur Frage des Makedonischen Ursprungs,” 59; Pizzoli, “Da Roma a Berlino,” 360).

101 E.g., Durand in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 233, no. 139; Gerry in Bagnoli, Klein, Mann, and Robinson, *Treasures in Heaven*, 201, no. 115.



in gold because its image of St. Demetrios was itself an icon and thus worthy of veneration like the mosaic below. As for the cameo in the pre-theft photograph (fig. 22), Cyril and Marlia M. Mango have documented lost Byzantine objects with cameos,<sup>102</sup> but no surviving Byzantine icon includes them, whereas in the West, cameos were reused from the early Middle Ages through the Renaissance.<sup>103</sup>

For all these reasons, the Sassoferrato frame is best understood as an Italian addition. The clinching evidence for this attribution is the form and arrangement of its Greek letters, for they are ancient, not medieval, and thus a Renaissance revival. Inscribed frames had been commonplace among Byzantine icons from the early Middle Ages.<sup>104</sup> To a Byzantine observer, the most discordant letter on the frame would be the majuscule sigma in the large ΑΓΙΟΣ, in the lower frame and in the lateral inscriptions (figs. 1, 26).<sup>105</sup> Derived from the ancient Phoenician šan, the four-stroke sigma (Σ) changed in the Hellenistic period into the single-stroke or lunate sigma (C), which continued through the Roman and Byzantine eras.<sup>106</sup> Up to the mid-fifteenth century, Greek inscriptions in Byzantium and Italy employed the lunate sigma, an example being the single line of Greek beneath the tomb of the Patriarch Joseph II (d. 1439) at S. Maria Novella in Florence.<sup>107</sup> The lunate sigma was standard in what Herbert Hunger termed the *epigraphische Auszeichnungsschrift*, a Byzantine script reserved for formal inscriptions,

as seen on an inscription of the emperor John VIII Palaiologos from the land walls of Constantinople (fig. 27).<sup>108</sup> Also characteristic of this script are smaller vowels and tall, narrow, crowded consonants, replete with ligatures, for example, στ in the first line and τρ and εν in the second line.

The designer of the Sassoferrato inscriptions rejected all aspects of this Byzantine script in favor of ancient conventions, as seen in an Attic decree of 408/7 BCE (fig. 28).<sup>109</sup> Besides the sigma, the icon primarily uses the ancient omega open at the bottom instead of the Byzantine omega open at the top (compare with fig. 27), as well as the classical theta with a dot instead of a crossbar in its center.<sup>110</sup> The letters of the lateral inscriptions are square, block-like, well-spaced, and generally devoid of ligatures. Compared to late form of the *Auszeichnungsschrift*, the icon's Greek letters may seem familiar and unremarkable because they resemble printing fonts, but contemporary beholders would not have shared that impression. The first printed Greek book was in 1476, or after the 1472 terminus ante quem of the frame, and Greek printing became common only in the sixteenth century.

The proper context of the ancient letters on the Sassoferrato frame is the revival of ancient Greek epigraphy in the Italian Renaissance, as first seen in two identical Greek inscriptions on the Tempio Malatestiano in

102 C. Mango and M. M. Mango, "Cameos in Byzantium," in *Cameos in Context: The Benjamin Zucker Lectures, 1990*, ed. M. Henig and M. Vickers (Oxford, 1993), 56–76, at 58–62.

103 Probably the best-known example is the Lothar Cross in Aachen with a cameo of Emperor Augustus in the center: P. Lasko, *Ars sacra, 800–1200* (Baltimore, 1972), 101.

104 M. Lidova, "Word of Image: Textual Frames of Early Byzantine Icons," in Lauxtermann and Toth, *Inscribing Texts in Byzantium*, 291–308.

105 Both Durand (in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 233, no. 139) and Theochari ("Ψηφιδωτή εικόν," 514) noted the peculiar sigma.

106 R. D. Woodard, *The Textualization of the Greek Alphabet* (New York, 2014), 101; E. M. Thompson, *Introduction to Greek and Latin Paleography* (Oxford, 1912), 144–47.

107 A. Pontani, "Le Maiuscole greche anticharie di Giano Lascaris: Per la storia dell'alfabeto greco in Italia nel '400," *Scrittura e civiltà* 16 (1992): 77–227, at 143–44, fig. 10. On the tomb of Joseph II, see A. Diana, "The Funerary Monument of Joseph II, Patriarch of Constantinople," *Μουσείο Μπενάκη* 13–14 (2013–14): 103–13.

108 H. Hunger, "Epigraphische Auszeichnungsmajuskel: Beitrag zu einem bisher kaum beachteten Kapitel der griechischen Paläographie," *JÖB* 26 (1977): 193–210; A. Rhoby, "Epigraphica-Palaeographica: Weitere Überlegungen zur epigraphischen Auszeichnungsmajuskel in byzantinischen Handschriften, vor allem auf Basis der Analyse von Texten in Versform," *Scripta* 11 (2018): 75–91. On the inscription of John VIII, see M. Kinloch, "An Inscription of John VIII Palaiologos and the Late Palaiologan Repairs," in *Materials for the Study of Late Antique and Medieval Greek and Latin Inscriptions in Istanbul*, ed. I. Toth and A. Rhoby (Oxford, 2020), 77–78. Another inscription from the same period of repairs is illustrated in I. Ševčenko, "The Palaeologan Renaissance," in *Renaissances before the Renaissance: Cultural Revivals of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. W. Treadgold (Stanford, 1984), 144–71, at 171, fig. 16.

109 R. P. Austin, *The Stoichedon Style in Greek Inscriptions* (Oxford, 1938), pl. 10.

110 In the second lozenge on the right side, the Byzantine and ancient omegas both appear, but the ancient form predominates elsewhere. For the theta, see the last letter in line 9 of the second lozenge on the right side. However, in the last lozenge, line 2, the first letter of θαυμάσια is not a theta, but a Roman I, a mistake. The goldsmith occasionally used the lunate sigma (line 4, the last lozenge).





Fig. 27. Inscription of John VIII Palaiologos on the land walls of Constantinople. 1432/33. Photo by A. Rhoby.

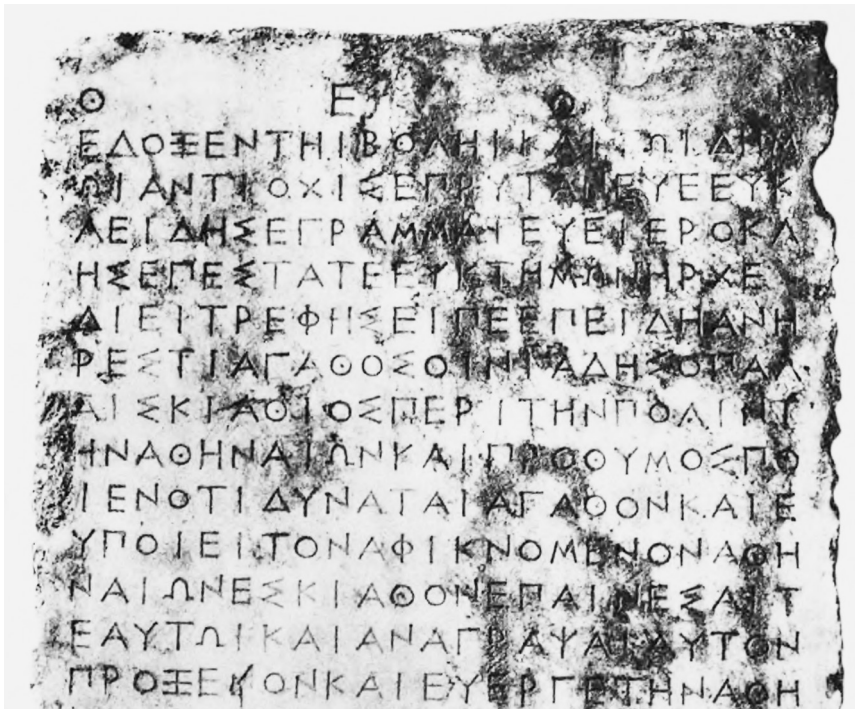


Fig. 28.  
Decree of 408/7 BCE in  
honor of Oeniades of  
Palaesciathus, detail. Photo  
after O. Kern, *Inscriptiones  
graecae* (Bonn, 1913), pl. 18.

Rimini from about 1450 (fig. 29),<sup>111</sup> which have been called “one of the most extraordinary documents of humanistic culture.”<sup>112</sup> The epigraphy here has the classical omega open at the bottom, a nu with unequal verticals, and the four-stroke sigma, and thus differs from the inscription from the walls of Constantinople.

111 C. Ricci, *Il Tempio malatestiano* (Milan, 1925), figs. 258, 259.

112 A. Campana, “Ciriaco d’Ancona e Lorenzo Valla sull’iscrizione greca del Tempio dei Dioscuri a Napoli,” *Archeologia Classica* 25–26 (1973–74): 64–102, at 90.

Nonetheless, a few elements of the *Auszeichnungsschrift* remain in the epsilon with a rounded back and a diminutive omicron in the center of line four.

In Rome a decade later, a purer form of the ancient script appeared in two grave monuments. The best known is that of Cardinal Bessarion at his church of the Holy Apostles, dated 1466 (fig. 30),<sup>113</sup> and thus

113 A. Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme in inschriftlicher Überlieferung*, vol. 3, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Stein: Nebst Addenda zu den Bänden 1 und 2* (Vienna, 2014), 458–60, with further bibliography.



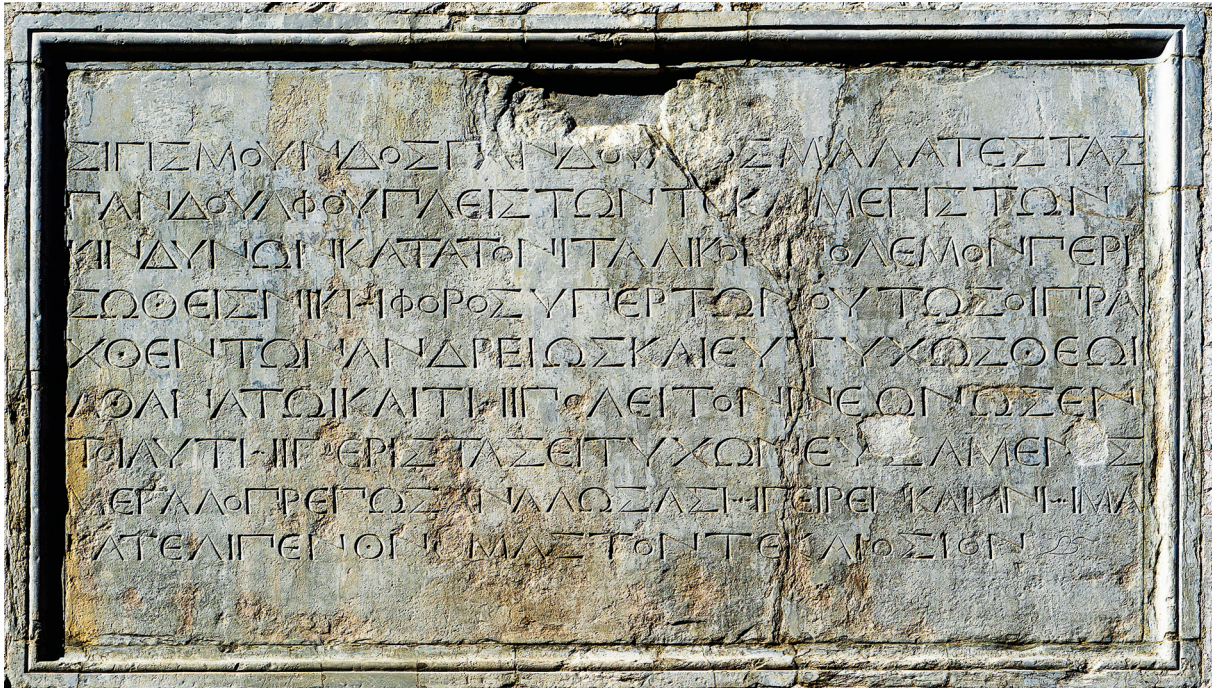


Fig. 29. Greek inscription, Tempio Malatestiano, north side, Rimini. 1450s. Photo by M. J. Waters.



Fig. 30. Tomb of Bessarion, Church of the Holy Apostles, Rome. 1466. Photo by F. Barry.



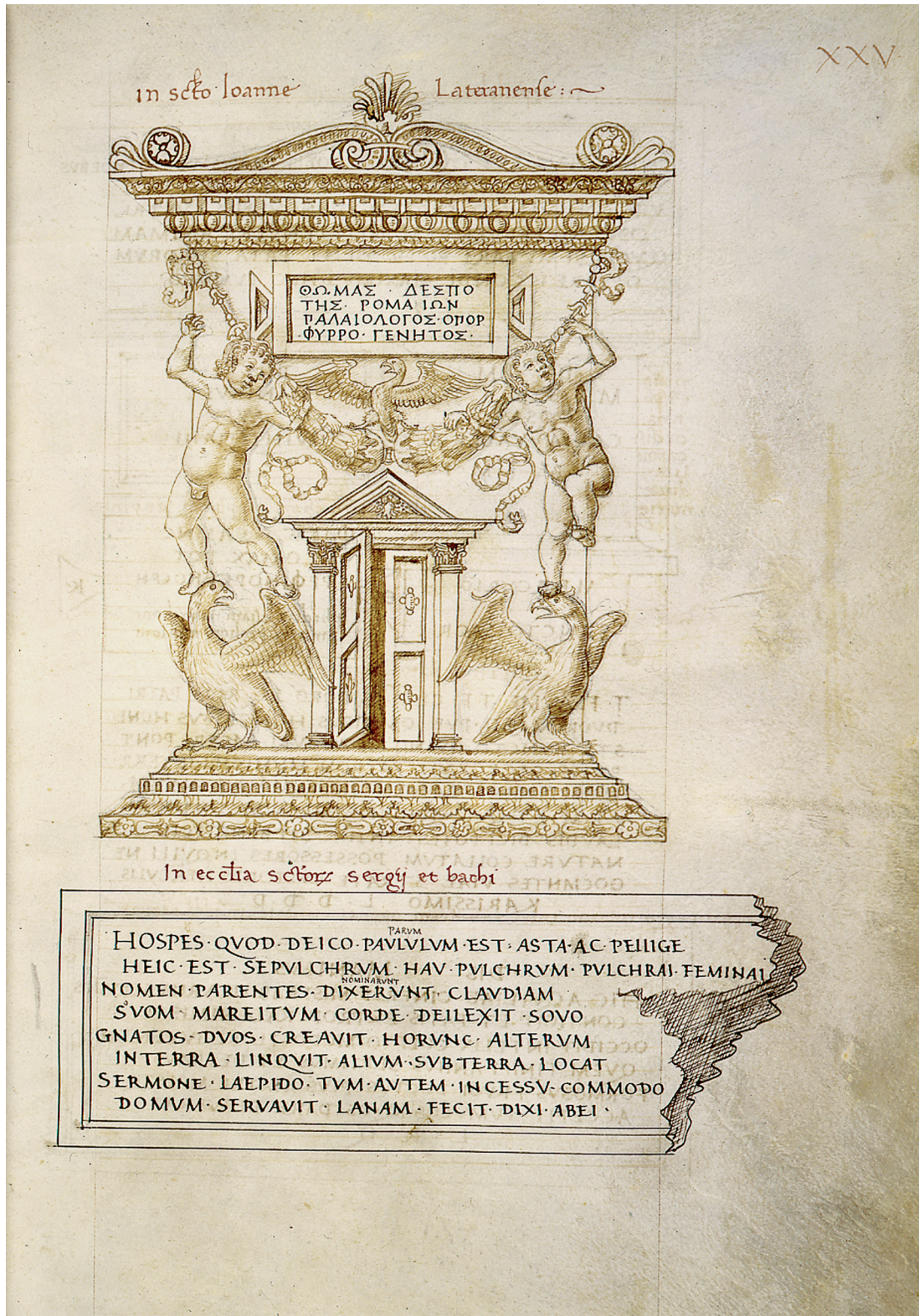


Fig. 31. Drawing of the tomb of Thomas Palaiologos, Reggio Emilia, Biblioteca A. Panizzi ms. Regg. C 398, f. XXVr. Ca. 1486. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Panizzi, Reggio Emilia.



prepared before his death in 1472. A second monument, unknown until noted by Anna Pontani, is the tomb of Thomas Palaiologos, the claimant to the Byzantine throne, who died while exiled in Rome in 1465. Only a drawing of his tomb survives, preserved in a later sylloge of inscriptions (fig. 31).<sup>114</sup> It indicates that the tomb was at the Lateran, but the will of his son Andreas states that Thomas was buried at St. Peter's and should be preferred.<sup>115</sup> Presumably that project was also finished before occupancy was required, making it the first classicizing Greek inscription in Rome. Compared to the Rimini inscriptions, the tomb epitaphs have a purer form of ancient epigraphy and share the ancient nu and pi with shafts of unequal length and an upsilon in the form of a Y, details not seen on the icon frame, perhaps because of its small size.

The Rimini inscriptions have been associated with Ciriaco d'Ancona (de' Pizzicollì), known as the father of classical Greek archaeology and epigraphy, although the attribution is debated.<sup>116</sup> Merchant-turned-humanist and indefatigable epigrapher, Ciriaco sought out ancient sites during his mercantile voyages to the eastern Mediterranean, took notes of inscriptions, and made drawings of monuments. He assembled his work in the

six-volume *Commentaria*, which most likely burned in 1514.<sup>117</sup> What survives are his letters about his discoveries, fragments of his diary, several Greek alphabets in his distinctive handwriting that are preserved in other manuscripts, and a few manuscripts with Greek and Latin inscriptions in Ciriaco's hand.<sup>118</sup> For example, one autograph of Ciriaco in a fifteenth-century miscellany has what he describes as old and new—that is, Byzantine—alphabets, evidence that Italian humanists distinguished between the ancient and what we know as the medieval (fig. 32).<sup>119</sup> The latter shows one form of the cursive of the day and has in common with the *Auszeichnungsschrift* elongated vertical letters and small vowels.

Humanists in Rome knew of Ciriaco's work. He corresponded with Bessarion, and the latter's autograph copy of Planudes' *Greek Anthology*, dated 1299, has an added leaf at the beginning with a copy of Ciriaco's Greek alphabet.<sup>120</sup> Pope Paul II also appears to have had a relationship with Ciriaco,<sup>121</sup> and according to a post-mortem inventory, Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga, a younger associate of Bessarion, owned the "Libro de le Antiquitate de Chiriaco de Ancona," which may have been a copy of Ciriaco's now-lost *Commentaria*.<sup>122</sup> There is good evidence, therefore, that Ciriaco's studies of ancient Greek epigraphy were known in Rome.

114 Pontani, "Maiuscole greche antiquarie," 155–56. The manuscript from which the drawing derives, Reggio Emilia, Biblioteca A. Panizzi, ms. Regg. C 398, from ca. 1486, is the sylloge of the Carmelite Michele Fabrizio Ferrarini and is the latest and finest of three copies. Ferrarini never went to Rome, so the tomb drawing must copy another sylloge. The literature on the manuscript and its creator is large and includes C. Franzoni and A. Sarchi, "Entre peinture, archéologie et muséographie: *L'Antiquarium* de Michele Fabrizio Ferrarini," *Revue de l'Art* 125.3 (1999): 20–31; B. Curran, *The Egyptian Renaissance: The Afterlife of Ancient Egypt in Early Modern Italy* (Chicago, 2007), 99–103.

115 J. Zurita, *Historia del rey don Hernando el Católico: De las empresas y ligas de Italia*, vol. 5:4.39, ff. 209v–210v (Zaragoza, 1610); P. K. Enepekides, "Das Wiener Testament des Andreas Palaiologos vom 7 April 1502," *Akten des XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongresses, München 1958*, ed. F. Dölger and H. G. Beck (Munich, 1960), 138–43, at 142; J. P. Harris, "A Worthless Prince? Andreas Palaeologus in Rome, 1465–1502," *OCP* 61 (1995): 537–54, at 554. I concur with W. Miller, "Miscellanea from the Near East: Balkan Exiles in Rome," in *Essays on the Latin Orient* (Cambridge, 1921), 497–515, at 500, that "all efforts to find his grave have proved fruitless."

116 M. Folini, "Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, Pio II e il Tempio Malatestiano," in *Il Tempio Malatestiano a Rimini*, ed. A. Paolucci (Modena, 2010), 36; A. Pontani, "Formes de l'alphabet grec en occident du moyen âge à la renaissance," in *Greek Letters from Tablets to Pixels*, ed. M. S. Macrakis (New Castle, DE, 1996), 57–68, at 58.

117 E. W. Bodnar, *Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens* (Brussels-Berchem, 1960), 69–72.

118 M. Chatzidakis, *Ciriaco d'Ancona und die Wiederentdeckung Griechenlands im 15. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 2017).

119 Ciriaco refers to the ancient alphabet as παλαιὰς ἀττικῆς (Vat. Barb. Lat. 86, f. Ir) and παλαιὸς Ἑλλήνας (Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana LXXX 22); S. Rizzo, "Gli umanisti, i testi classici e le scritture maiuscole," in *Il libro e il testo: Atti del convegno internazionale, Urbino 20–23 sett. 1982* (Urbino, 1984), 223–41, at 232–33, pls. 1, 2; Pontani, "Maiuscole greche antiquarie," 99. Vat. Barb. Lat. 86 has an emendation by Lorenzo Valla (d. 1457): J. Cousin, *Recherches sur Quintilien: Manuscrits et éditions* (Paris, 1975), 98.

120 Venice, Biblioteca Marciana Z 481. A. Turyn, *Dated Greek Manuscripts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries in the Libraries of Italy*, vol. 1 (Urbano, IL, 1972), 95–96; Bodnar, *Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens*, 55, 57; A. Campana, "Giannozzo Manetti, Ciriaco e l'Arco di Traiano ad Ancona," *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 2 (1959): 483–504, at 488–90. The alphabet on f. Ir corresponds to Bessarion's tomb inscription with the exception of the nu. In the manuscript, that letter does not have legs of unequal length and instead resembles the Latin N. The manuscript is digitized at <http://www.internetcultuale.it/>.

121 R. Weiss, *Un umanista veneziano, Papa Paolo II* (Venice, 1958), 15–16.

122 Chambers, *Renaissance Cardinal*, 177.



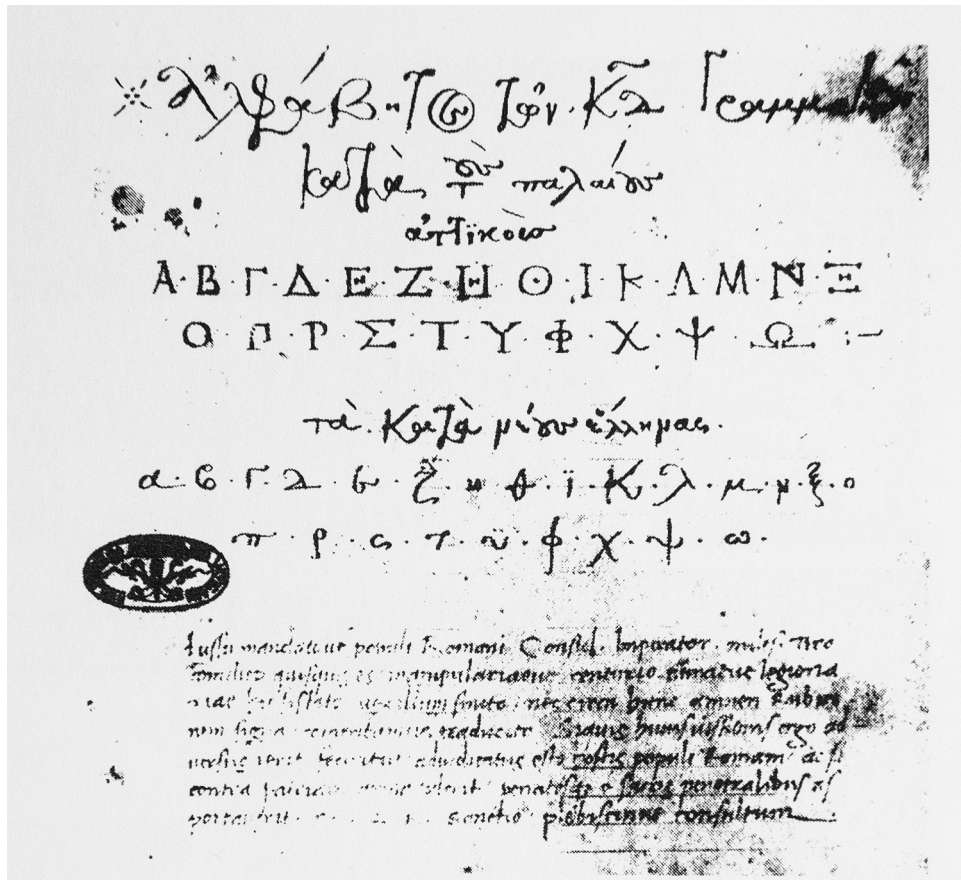


Fig. 32.  
Greek alphabets,  
Ciriaco d'Ancona.  
Vatican City, Biblioteca  
Apostolica Vaticana,  
Barb. Lat. 86, f. 1r.  
© 2021 Biblioteca  
Apostolica Vaticana.

The aforementioned Attic decree also exemplifies another feature of Greek epigraphy of the fifth to fourth centuries: the *stoichedon* style, in which letters of equal size align horizontally and vertically in rows and columns, facilitated by a preliminary grid.<sup>123</sup> The lateral inscription on the icon resembles this style since its uniform quadratic letters also form columns, although not in the manner of the ancient inscription. The icon's lozenge format dictates lines of unequal length, increasing from one to six letters and decreasing back to one letter (figs. 26, 33). As a result, the letters of every other line form columns. Because of this structure, the ligatures of *ου* and *στ*, noted above in the bottom lozenge, are not stylistic lapses but required by the number of characters in the line. Each lozenge has thirty-six letters

or characters, which amount to 144 letters or ligatures on each side, showing that these inscriptions were composed with evident care in a format that recalls Greek pattern or figure poetry. The genre of pattern poetry began in antiquity, continued through the Byzantine period, and reappeared in early printed Greek at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>124</sup> Finally, the lozenge format is only possible with the ancient *scripta continua*, which the Byzantines had abandoned centuries earlier. No other Byzantine or Renaissance example of *stoichedon* layout before printing has heretofore been cited, making this yet another unique feature of the Sassoferrato icon.

At this point, it is appropriate to turn to the content of the inscriptions. The lateral inscriptions confirm that the myron in the ampoule came from St. Demetrios:

123 Austin, *Stoichedon Style*; B. H. McLean, *An Introduction to Greek Epigraphy of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods from Alexander the Great down to the Reign of Constantine (323 B.C.–A.D. 337)* (Ann Arbor, 2002), 45–48.

124 L. Diamantopoulou, *Griechische visuelle Poesie: Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt, 2016), 25–115.



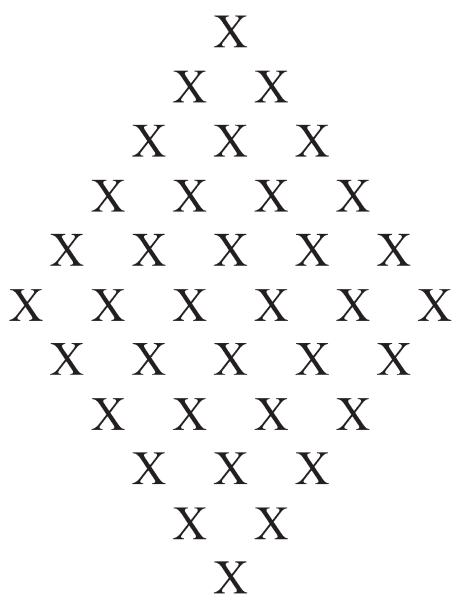


Fig. 33. Miniature mosaic icon of St. Demetrios, lozenge design of the frame inscriptions. Drawing by author.

#### Left inscription:

Great martyr Demetrios intercede with God so that he may help me to conquer my enemies and subjugate them beneath my feet, your faithful servant Justinian, the earthly Emperor of the Romans.<sup>125</sup>

#### Right inscription:

This vessel carries holy oil, drawn from the well in which the body of the divine and myron producing Demetrios lies, spouting forth myron and working miracles for the whole world and for the faithful.<sup>126</sup>

125 ὁ μεγαλομάρτυς Δημήτριε μεσίτευσον πρὸς θεὸν ἵνα τῷ πιστῷ σου δούλῳ τῷ ἐπιγείῳ βασιλεῖ Ῥωμαίων Ἰουστινιανῷ δοίῃ μοι νικῆσαι τοὺς ἐχθρούς μου καὶ τούτους ὑποτάξαι ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας μου.

126 Αὕτη ἡ στάμνος φέρει μύρον ἅγιον ἐκ τοῦ φρέατος ἀντλήσασα ἐν ᾧ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ μυροβλύτου θεοῦ Δημητρίου τοῦτο ἀναβλύζον κεῖται ἐκτελῶν θαυμάσια πάσῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ καὶ τοῖς πιστοῖς. Both inscriptions are from A. A. Vasiliev, "The Historical Significance of the Mosaic of Saint Demetrius at Sassoferrato," *DOP* 5 (1950): 29–39, at 32, who transcribed the left inscription from the pre-theft

The notion in the right inscription that the saint's body had been thrown into a well is attested from the early fourteenth century and perhaps earlier.<sup>127</sup> As for the left inscription, the Renaissance date of the frame renders untenable a previous attempt to determine a Byzantine context for the mention of the emperor Justinian.<sup>128</sup> All educated people in fifteenth-century Italy would have known of Justinian for his codification of Roman law and some for his equestrian statue in Constantinople, which Ciriaco d'Ancona had studied in situ. Moreover, Leonardo Bruni and Flavio Biondo consulted Greek manuscripts of Procopius for their own histories.<sup>129</sup> In sum, the frame's texts and emblems transformed what had been the frameless miniature mosaic of a Byzantine aristocrat into a work of imperial art, or at least its simulation. Despite the Renaissance elements of the frame, the icon remained Orthodox and Greek. For example, the sapphire and rubies, plundered when the icon was stolen, fit squarely within a long-standing practice of richly adorning icon frames.<sup>130</sup> The challenge is to find a context that encompasses all these traits.

#### Box

The icon's container has seldom been noted, much less studied, and was first illustrated only in 2013.<sup>131</sup> The panel rests on a small cushion within a simple rectangular wooden box with a sliding lid (see above, fig. 6). A large beta cross covers its lid, and an abstract floral pattern decorates the narrow sides of the box. The cross resembles those on the frame, suggesting that both box

photograph and added diacritical marks, especially iota subscripts, not found in the original.

127 C. Bakirtzis, "Pilgrimage to Thessalonike: The Tomb of St. Demetrios," *DOP* 56 (2002): 175–92, at 185–86.

128 Vasiliev, "The Historical Significance," 29–39.

129 C. Occhipinti, "Sulla Fortuna di Procopio di Cesarea nel XV secolo: Il Giustiniano di Costantinopoli e i primi monumenti equestri di età umanistica," *Rinascimento*, 2nd ser., 42 (2002): 351–80; B. Croke, "Procopius, from Manuscripts to Books: 1400–1850," *Histos Supplement* 9 (2019): 1.1–1.73, at 1.13–1.25. The history of the statue of Justinian is the subject of E. Boeck, *The Bronze Horseman of Justinian in Constantinople: The Cross-Cultural Biography of a Mediterranean Monument* (Cambridge, 2021). I thank Elena Boeck for sharing the relevant chapter with me before publication.

130 Durand, "Freisinger Ikone," 123–24.

131 Bauer, *Stadt und ihr Patron*, 455.



and frame are products of the same Renaissance refashioning. For centuries, boxes with sliding lids had been used to enclose relics, as well as many other objects.<sup>132</sup> Because the Renaissance refashioning of the icon incorporated the myron of St. Demetrios, its container—the box—was a reliquary as much as the more conventional reliquaries that Perotti sent to Sassoferrato. The icon's container can also be associated with an early Renaissance practice of storing paintings in boxes. Before the sixteenth century, small panels were not customarily hung on walls but taken out of their containers for private viewing and then put away.<sup>133</sup>

The interior and exterior bottoms of the box display a large gold monogram (fig. 34). The letters may be read as ΠΑΥ or ΠΑΥΛ, depending on whether the lambda shares the lower part of the alpha. Both signify ΠΑΥΛΟΣ, Paul, or better, ΠΑΥΛΟΥ, belonging to Paul.<sup>134</sup> The arrangement of letters resembles the heraldic monogram of the ruling Palaiologan dynasty, as seen in a late example on Samothrace from 1433

132 C. Pantanella in Bagnoli, Klein, Mann, and Robinson, *Treasures of Heaven*, 36, no. 13; H. A. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das 'wahre' Kreuz: Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland* (Wiesbaden, 2004), 104–5, 112–13. The True Cross reliquary that Bessarion gave to the Scuola di S. Maria della Carità in Venice has a sliding lid: H. A. Klein, “Cardinal Bessarion, Philippe de Mézières, and the Rhetoric of Relics in Late Medieval Venice,” in *La stauroteca di Bessarione fra Costantinopoli e Venezia*, ed. H. A. Klein, V. Poletto, and P. Schreiner (Venice, 2017), 3–42, at 27–28. Two late Byzantine painted boxes have been thought to have served as reliquaries: Cleveland Museum of Art 1999.229.a-b: B. Ratliff in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 137–38, no. 73; and New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art L.2013.26.2, on display in 2019 from a private collection. Boxes with sliding lids had secular uses in Byzantium, as in the case of the ivory Veroli Casket with erotic imagery: J. Beckwith, *The Veroli Casket* (London, 1962).

133 A. Knight Powell, “A Short History of the Picture as Box,” *Representations* 141.1 (2018): 95–130, at 97; V. M. Schmidt, “Painting and Individual Devotion in Late Medieval Italy: The Case of Saint Catherine of Alexandria,” in *Visions of Holiness: Art and Devotion in Renaissance Italy*, ed. A. Ladis and S. E. Zuraw (Athens, GA, 2001), 21–36, at 31–33.

134 For  $\Pi$  and  $\Lambda$  sharing common letter forms, see “Monogram,” *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. P. Kazhdan, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1991), 1397. The letters  $\Pi$  and  $\Lambda$  are often combined, as in a twelfth-century miniature at Mount Athos, Dionysiou cod. 33 (S. M. Pelekanides, *The Treasures of Mount Athos: Illuminated Manuscripts, Miniatures-Headpieces-Initial Letters*, vol. 1 [Athens, 1974], fig. 74); and St. Paul at the Chora Church in Constantinople, ca. 1320 (P. A. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, vol. 2 [New York, 1966], 31).



Fig. 34. Box for the miniature mosaic icon of St. Demetrios, detail of interior monogram. Photo by author; courtesy of the Comune di Sassoferrato.

(fig. 25).<sup>135</sup> In both the box and the relief, the initial pi is much taller than the following alpha, whose diagonals continue above to form an upsilon on the box or a lambda and gamma in the Palaiologan monogram. This resemblance to the Palaiologan monogram reinforces the imperial character of the ensemble. Its position on the back of the box recalls the steatite icon of John the Baptist in the Moscow Kremlin, whose back side has the monogram of Thomas Palaiologos, a person of interest in what follows.

135 Ousterhout, “Byzantium between East and West,” 160–61. The same enlarged pi appeared earlier in the monogram of Eirene Roulina Palaiologina on her garments depicted at the church of the Chora in Constantinople: Ousterhout, “Emblems of Power,” fig. 8.





Fig. 35. Frame of Querini Diptych, outer leaves. Brescia, Museo di Santa Giulia. 1440–64. Photo © Photographic Archives Museums of Brescia.

### Renaissance Contexts

Of all the clues on the icon's frame and container, the box's monogram is the most tantalizing, and it will be argued that it refers to Paul II, the Venetian Pope from 1464 to 1471. Before, as Cardinal Pietro Barbo, he had amassed what has been termed the greatest art collection since the fall of the Roman Empire.<sup>136</sup> An inventory of Barbo's collection from 1457 lists over three thousand items with an emphasis on gems, intaglios, cameos, and icons.<sup>137</sup> Of the thirty-seven icons in the

inventory,<sup>138</sup> twenty-four are in mosaic, a sizeable number considering that a modern corpus of mosaic icons lists only forty-four.<sup>139</sup> Among the mosaic icons, one had a golden frame, and many others had silver frames. Both types significantly increased an object's value and

136 E. Müntz, *Les arts à la cour des papes pendant le XV<sup>e</sup> et le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1879), 181–287.

137 The inventory was discovered and initially published by Müntz, *Arts à la cour des papes*, 2:181–287; for the Byzantine icons,

see 201–5. Also on the Byzantine icons: Duits, “Una icona pulcra,” 127–41. On the Barbo collection, see A. M. Corbo, *Paolo II Barbo: Dalla mercatura al papato, 1464–1471* (Rome, 2004), 25–34.

138 X. F. Salomon, “Cardinal Pietro Barbo's Collection and Its Inventory Reconsidered,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 15 (2003): 1–18, at 4. See also Moretti, *Roma bizantina*, 29–35.

139 Müntz, *Arts à la cour des papes*, 2:203–5; Duits, “Una icona pulcra,” 129. The modern corpus is Furlan, *Icone*.





Fig. 36. Frame of Querini diptych, inner leaves. 1440–64. Brescia, Museo di Santa Giulia. Photo © Photographic Archives Museums of Brescia.

were listed first in the inventory, as was customary in the Renaissance.<sup>140</sup>

The late antique Querini diptych (figs. 35, 36), one of the few works that can be traced back to the cardinal, reveals how he personalized his collection.<sup>141</sup> The two

ivory plaques are enclosed in classicizing gold frames. An elegant inscription on the back of the first panel—the one with the larger Latin letters—is composed as if the object were speaking: “My Master is Cardinal Pietro Barbo, Venetian and generous scholar, your priest and Bishop of Vicenza. He delights in a wondrous love for these works of ingenuity.”<sup>142</sup> Beside the

140 Duits, “Una icona pulcra,” 133; R. Duits, “Byzantine Icons in the Medici Collection,” in *Byzantine Art and Renaissance Europe*, ed. A. Lymberopoulou and R. Duits (Burlington, VT, 2013), 157–88, at 174–75.

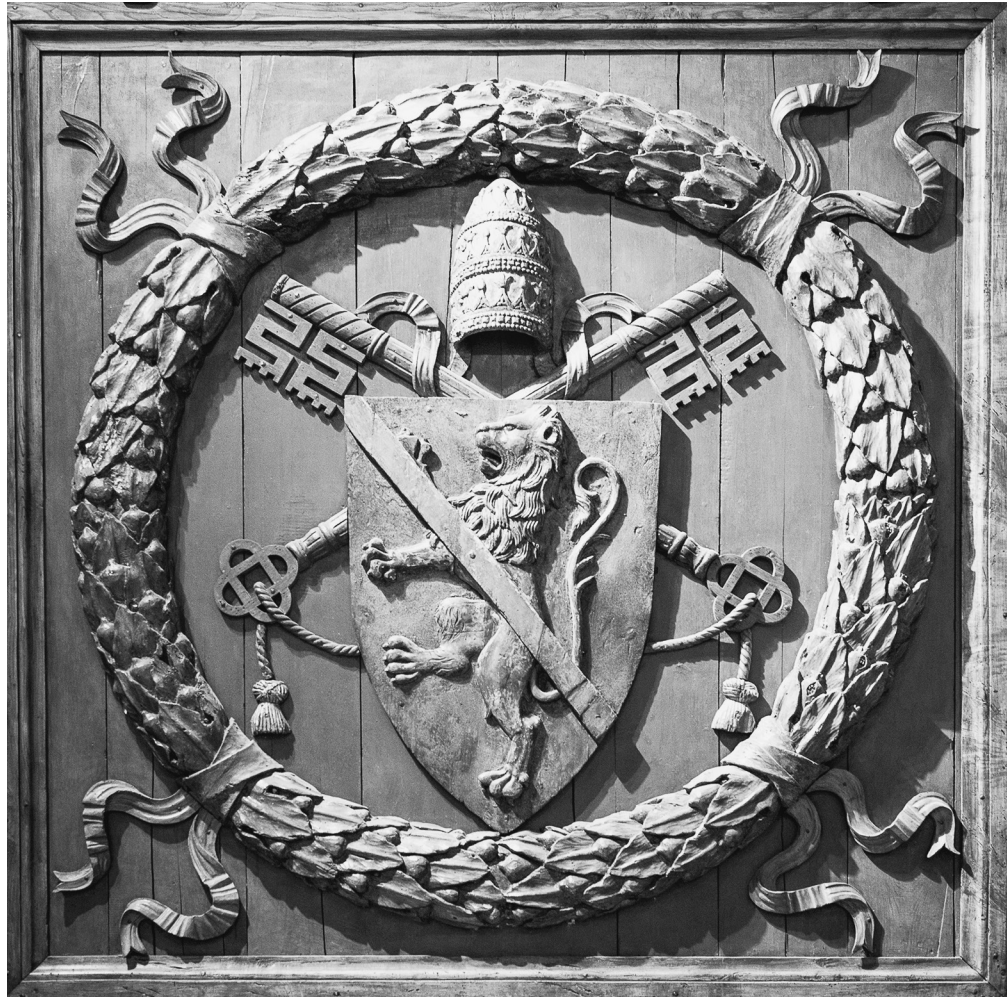
141 *Iconografia e immagini queriniane: Catalogo della mostra* (Brescia, 1981), 139–41; M. L. Casanova Uccella, *Palazzo Venezia: Paolo II e le fabbriche di S. Marco* (Rome, 1980), 41–43; M. Minasi, “Collezionismo,” in *La Roma di Leon Battista Alberti: Umanisti, architetti e artisti alla scoperta dell’antico nella città del Quattrocento*, ed. F. P. Fiore (Milan, 2005), 350; K. W. Christian, *Empire without End: Antiquities Collections in Renaissance Rome, ca. 1350–1527*

(New Haven, 2010), 94–95. On the ivory diptych, see W. F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters* (Mainz, 1952), 43. The gilt silver frames of the cameos also were accompanied by inscriptions and coats of arms: Müntz, *Arts à la cour des papes*, 2:139–40.

142 PETRVS H / ERVS MEVS / EST VENET / IS GENEROS / VS ALVMNV / S BARBVS C / ARDO SACER / TVVS ET V / INCENTIA PR / AESVL HORV / M OPERVM I / NGENIIS MI / RO OBLECT / ATVS AMORE. Text and other translations



Fig. 37.  
Coat of arms of  
Pope Paul II.  
Palazzo Venezia,  
Rome. 1464–71.  
Photo by author.



cardinal's appreciation of skillfully fashioned objects like miniature mosaics, the rich vine scroll that surrounds the inscriptions attests to the cardinal's regard for ornate frames as seen here and on the Sassoferrato icon. On the front of the diptych (fig. 36), the upper corners of the frames have the cardinal's coat of arms, a dark blue shield with a rampant silver lion and diagonal crossbar, the same color combination that appears on a papal ring of Paul II.<sup>143</sup> Above it is the standard cardinal's galero with tassels. When made pope, Paul II

continued to use the same shield device, but replaced the galero with the papal tiara.

Both versions of the coat of arms appear above the doors of the Palazzo Venezia in Rome (fig. 37).<sup>144</sup> There he lived as cardinal and pope and kept his grand art collection.<sup>145</sup> Once made pope, Paul II continued to collect with undiminished enthusiasm, although no documentation survives of his new accessions.<sup>146</sup> Cardinal Barbo had possessed a painted icon of St. Demetrios but none in mosaic, his preferred medium;<sup>147</sup> thus the

in Salomon, "Cardinal Pietro Barbo's Collection," 11; Christian, *Empire without End*, 94, 231.

143 T. Frimmel, "Die Ceremonienringe in den Kunstsammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 14 (1893): 1–10, at 6.

144 Casanova Uccella, *Palazzo Venezia*, 45.

145 Ibid., 21–22.

146 Müntz, *Arts à la cour des papes*, 2:131–34; Weiss, *Umanista veneziano*, 26–32; Christian, *Empire without End*, 94.

147 Müntz, *Arts à la cour des papes*, 2:205; Duits, "Una icona pulcra," 141.



Sassoferrato panel would have complemented his collection. Its gilt silver frame matched most of the cardinal's miniature mosaics.<sup>148</sup> Putting the name Paul in Greek on its container instead of his coat of arms expressed ownership in a novel, but nonetheless effective manner for erudite beholders, and it, of course, ties the creation of the frame and box to Paul's pontificate from 1464 to 1471. A more specific date will be suggested presently.

In the Renaissance Rome of Paul II, the mention of Emperor Justinian on the icon's frame would not have been problematic, but seen instead as anachronic—not anachronistic—according to the argument of Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood.<sup>149</sup> Modern chronology privileges a layered sense of time, and, like the also modern discipline of archaeology, it abhors mixed strata. The anachronology of the Renaissance instead valued temporal flexibility and a work of art unmoored from linear chronology, thus tending toward timelessness. The Sassoferrato icon, which Nagel and Wood mention, exemplifies the anachronic.<sup>150</sup> It claims that Justinian commissioned it, thereby attesting to its antiquity and confirming the Renaissance belief that miniature mosaics were ancient paintings, as Cardinal Jacopo Ammanati once explained.<sup>151</sup> Thus for the Renaissance, the Sassoferrato frame was historically valid and central to its significance in the collection of Paul II.

How did Niccolò Perotti obtain it from the papal collection? After the death of Paul II in 1471, his successor, Sixtus IV, commissioned three cardinals, Basileios Bessarion, Angelo Capranica, and the previously mentioned Francesco Gonzaga, to settle the estate of the late pope. Paul II's significant debts necessitated the liquidation of his collections.<sup>152</sup> Cardinal Gonzaga acquired at least one of Paul II's gems,<sup>153</sup> and Bessarion also may have kept items for himself with the approval

of the new pope, whom he had long known. Sixtus has been called a "protégé of Bessarion and a long-time member of the Bessarion circle."<sup>154</sup> One year later, Sixtus permitted Perotti to send a group of reliquaries, including the icon of St. Demetrios, to the church in Sassoferrato.<sup>155</sup> Perotti most likely obtained the icon through Bessarion's work for the estate of Paul II.

That said, central questions about the Sassoferrato icon remain: who added the frame and why? Even though Paul II reframed at least one of his ivories, the Querini Diptych, he probably did not instigate the renovation of the St. Demetrios icon, because he lacked the requisite knowledge of Byzantine iconography and classical epigraphy. He also probably did not have a sophisticated knowledge of Greek, Latin being the principal subject of his studies, although his teachers in Venice included George of Trebizond.<sup>156</sup> However, Pietro Barbo must at least have known the alphabet enough to read the names of the saints portrayed on his Byzantine icons and to record them in the inventory of his collection. Those entries in the manuscript are credited to Hand B, which has been attributed to Barbo himself.<sup>157</sup> As cardinal and pope, he took an interest in Greek patristics and sponsored Latin translations of the *Homilies* of Gregory of Nyssa and Basil's *Homilies on the Hexaemeron*.<sup>158</sup> Reputably, Paul II was hostile to humanism, but that reputation stems from disgruntled humanists (especially Platina), whom Paul dismissed from their well-compensated posts at the Vatican in his reform of the Curia.<sup>159</sup> Modern

148 Duits, "Una icona pulcra," 133.

149 *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York, 2010), 7–19, 29–34. The book was anticipated by their article, "Toward a New Model of Renaissance Anachronism," *ArtB* 87 (2005): 403–15.

150 Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 98, 100.

151 Müntz, *Arts à la cour des papes*, 2:132. Cited in Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 101.

152 Chambers, *Renaissance Cardinal*, 46–47.

153 Ibid., 162; Moretti, *Roma bizantina*, 35; C. M. Brown, L. Fusco, and G. Corti, "Lorenzo de' Medici and the Dispersal of the Antiquarian Collections of Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga," *Arte Lombarda*, n.s. 90/91.3–4 (1989): 86–103, at 86.

154 J. Monfasani, "Giovanni Gatti of Messina: A Profile and an Unedited Text," in *Filologia umanistica per Gianvito Resta*, ed. V. Ferra and G. Ferraù (Padua, 1997), 1315–38, at 1325, reprinted in J. Monfasani, *Greeks and Latins in Renaissance Italy: Studies on Humanism and Philosophy in the Fifteenth Century* (Burlington, VT, 2004), vii, 1325.

155 See n. 5.

156 Weiss, *Umanista veneziano*, 14–15; J. Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of His Rhetoric and Logic* (Leiden, 1976), 24, 34, 39, 132, 179–81, 184–85; M. L. King, *Venetian Humanism in the Age of Patrician Dominance* (Princeton, 2014), 19.

157 Salomon, "Cardinal Pietro Barbo's Collection," 4. How well he identified the icons cannot be known because no surviving icon has been traced back to the inventory. The accuracy of the Byzantine descriptions is never doubted in the literature.

158 C. L. Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington, IL, 1985), 230.

159 J. F. D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation* (Baltimore, 1983), 92.



historians, beginning with Roberto Weiss, have tempered the fifteenth-century criticisms.<sup>160</sup>

Several humanists and Byzantines in Rome might have commissioned the icon's frame and box and would have been able to supply an ampoule with the myron of St. Demetrios from Thessaloniki. The initial suspects would be the scholars and prelates around Cardinal Bessarion, such as Niccolò Perotti, Theodore Gaza, and John Argyropoulos. Theodore Gaza, for example, would have been well acquainted with the cult of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki, for he had emigrated from that city.<sup>161</sup> Heretofore, most investigations of the icon have credited its Renaissance reframing to some nexus of Bessarion and Perotti,<sup>162</sup> but the matter is more complicated than that.

Cardinal Bessarion is not likely to have refashioned the mosaic icon, even though he would have been intimately familiar with Palaiologan emblems and had his own collection of Byzantine objects. In addition to his vast library, these included the fourteenth-century True Cross reliquary that he gave to the Scuola di S. Maria della Carità in Venice<sup>163</sup> and several miniature mosaic icons that he willed to the Vatican.<sup>164</sup> However, the art that the cardinal himself patronized is Western in orientation and does not show the *mélange* of Byzantine and Renaissance elements found on the icon's frame and box.<sup>165</sup> For example, between 1464 and 1467, the Roman artists Antoniazio Romano and Melozzo da Forlì painted the apse of Bessarion's chapel at the church of the Holy Apostles in a contemporary Renaissance style.<sup>166</sup>

160 Weiss, *Umanista veneziano*, 9–32. More recently on Paul II, see Corbo, *Paolo II Barbo*.

161 C. Bianca, "Gaza, Teodoro," in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 52 (1999), [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/teodoro-gaza\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/teodoro-gaza_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/), accessed 13 March 2021.

162 E.g., R. S. Nelson, "Byzantine Art in the Italian Renaissance," in *Heaven & Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections*, ed. A. Drandaki, D. Papanikola-Bakirtzi, and A. Tourta, vol. 1 (Athens, 2013), 326–35, at 332.

163 Klein, Poletto, and Schreiner, *Stauroteca di Bessarione*.

164 Müntz, *Arts à la cour des papes*, 2:298, n. 3.

165 This is the conclusion of L. Bolick's thesis, with which I agree: "Culture, Humanism and Intellect: Cardinal Bessarion as Patron of the Arts" (PhD diss., The Open University, 2014).

166 S. Isidori, "Il cardinal Bessarione e gli affreschi della Cappella dei santi Eugenia, Giovanni Battista e Michele arcangelo nella basilica dei Santi XII Apostoli in Roma," in *Bessarione e la sua Accademia*, ed. A. Gutkowski and E. Prinzivalli (Rome, 2012), 135–56.

Bessarion's motivations for his visual art patronage are surely complex and largely unstudied, but Laura Bolick has called attention to the possible role of the papal conclave that elected Pope Calixtus III in 1455. According to the account of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, the future Pius II, the cardinals had difficulty agreeing on a successor to Nicholas V until a group of them decided on Bessarion. His election was blocked, however, by the anti-Greek statements of the cardinal of Avignon, who is said to have asked,

Bessarion hasn't even shaved his beard, and he's going to be our head? How do we know his conversion is sincere? . . . Is the Latin Church so hard up that it can't find a man fit to be pope without having to turn to the Greek? Reverend Fathers, go ahead and do as you like. But I, and those who think like me, will never accept a Greek as pope.<sup>167</sup>

Such prejudice would have encouraged cultural assimilation and the commissioning of normative Italian art.

Niccolò Perotti probably also did not renovate the Sassoferato icon, although he knew Greek, made translations from that language, and has even been called Bessarion's "ghost writer" for his Latin texts that the cardinal first composed in Greek.<sup>168</sup> He and Bessarion collaborated on the frontispiece to the cardinal's copy of Ptolemy's *Geography* in Venice, from about 1453 (fig. 38).<sup>169</sup> The greater part of the page is filled with the International Gothic portrait of the richly clad Ptolemy, who stands by the well-appointed scholar's study of a Gothic palace. Below the miniature is a Greek epigram in the first-person voice of Ptolemy, followed by a Latin translation. Both are inscribed in

167 Pius II, *Commentaries* 1.28.4–6 (M. Meserve and M. Simonetta, ed., *Pius II: Commentaries*, vol. 2 [Cambridge, MA, 2003], 140–41). On Bessarion's beard, see M. J. Zucker, "Raphael and the Beard of Pope Julius II," *ArtB* 59.4 (December 1977): 524–33, at 525.

168 Kallendorf in *Oxford Bibliographies*; J. Monfasani, "Bessarion Latinus," *Rinascimento* 21 (1981): 165–209, at 167; D. Caso, "La Bibliothèque grecque du Cardinal Bessarion et la version latine de la 'Monodie pour Smyrne' d'Aelius Aristide par Niccolò Perotti," *REG* 126.2 (2013): 635–44.

169 R. S. Nelson, "Byzantium and the Rebirth of Art and Learning in Italy and France," in Evans, *Faith and Power*, 520; color illustration of the whole page in J. M. Massing, *Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration*, ed. J. A. Levenson (New Haven, 1991), 226–27, no. 126.



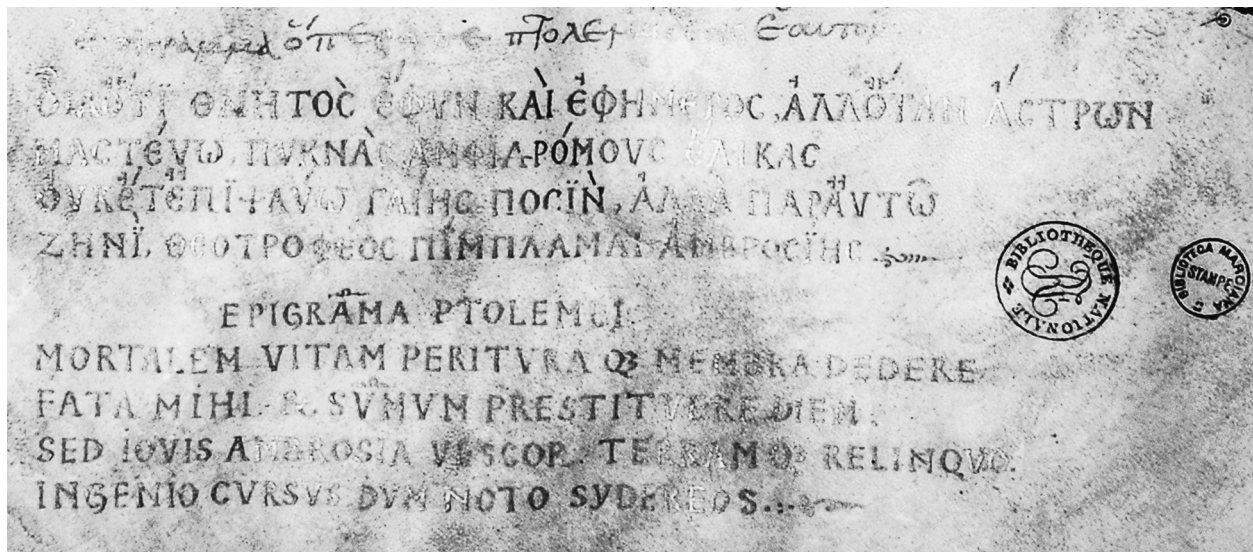


Fig. 38. Frontispiece, Ptolemy's *Geography*. Venice, Biblioteca Marciana Gr. Z.388 [=333], f. Fv. Ca. 1453. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Marciana.

reflective gold ink that is difficult to photograph uniformly. The poem came from Bessarion's manuscript of the *Greek Anthology*, the one with Ciriaco's alphabet. Perotti made the Latin translation, as he explained in a letter.<sup>170</sup> The manuscript's scribe, Ioannes Rhosos, inscribed both texts in his standard hand. The Greek and Latin alphabets are Byzantine and Byzantine inspired, as Stanley Morison observed,<sup>171</sup> and show no signs of an antique revival. However, a decade after the Ptolemy manuscript, Bessarion commissioned a tomb inscription in ancient Attic letters. Epigraphical fashion had changed.

Because of their writings, scholars are the best-known Byzantines in the Renaissance today, but others with varied occupations and social standing also immigrated to the West, as Jonathan Harris has shown.<sup>172</sup> One person well-known in the Greek community of Rome was the aforementioned Thomas Palaiologos, despot of the Morea, brother of the last emperor, Constantine VIII, who died defending Constantinople

in 1453. After the Ottoman conquest of the Morea in 1460, Thomas took his family to Corfu and left them there as he continued to Italy. He brought with him the relics of the head and arm of St. Andrew, which he had taken from Patras before the Turks arrived. The despot and his relics were well received in Rome by Pope Pius II (1458–64).<sup>173</sup> As the acknowledged

170 S. Marcon, "La miniatura nei manoscritti latini commissionati dal cardinal Bessarione," in *Bessarione e l'umanesimo: Catalogo della mostra*, ed. G. Fiaccadori (Naples, 1994), 171–95, at 189.  
171 S. Morison, *Politics and Script: Aspects of Authority and Freedom in the Development of Graeco-Latin Script from the Sixth Century B.C. to the Twentieth Century A.D.* (Oxford, 1972), 288, pl. 165.  
172 J. Harris, *Greek Emigres in the West, 1400–1520* (Camberley, UK, 1995).  
173 Ibid., 82; D. M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor: The Life and Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of the Romans* (New York, 1992), 114. As recounted in the *Commentaries* of Pius II, Thomas left Andrew's head at Ancona and went on by himself to Rome because it was then thought too dangerous to bring the relic across the intervening territory. Later when peace returned to the Papal lands, the head came in a solemn procession in which Bessarion played a prominent role. At Rome, a large ceremonial reception greeted the relic of St. Peter's brother. That ceremony has now been reanimated by A. Grafton, "The 2019 Josephine Waters Bennett Lecture: The Winged Eye at Work: Leon Battista Alberti Surveys Old St. Peter's," *Renaissance Quarterly* 73 (2020): 1137–78, at 1138–40. See also M. Maskarinec, "Mobilizing Sanctity: Pius II and the Head of Andrew in Rome," in *Authority and Spectacle in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of Teofilo F. Ruiz*, ed. Y.-G. Liang and J. Rodriguez (New York, 2017), 186–202. Pope Paul VI returned the head of Andrew to Patras in 1964. See also F. A. Gragg and L. C. Gabel, *The Commentaries of Pius II, Books IV and V* (Northampton, MA, 1947), 377–78, 523–41; R. O. Rubinstein, "Pius II's Piazza S. Pietro and St. Andrew's Head," in *Enea Silvio Piccolomini Papa Pio II: Atti del convegno per il quinto centenario della morte e altri scritti*, ed. D. Maffei (Siena, 1968), 221–43, at 235–43.



heir to the Byzantine throne, Thomas was important to Pius's plans for a crusade to recover Constantinople, for just as with the Fourth Crusade, the Latins needed a Byzantine pretender to the throne to lend legitimacy to their enterprise. In ill health, Pius struggled to organize a crusade and died at Ancona just as it was to begin, so the effort was abandoned. However, in the first month of his pontificate, Paul II affirmed his intention to continue the crusading plans of his predecessor and put Bessarion and two other cardinals in charge. As Kenneth Setton discussed, it was a good moment to attack the Ottomans because Mehmed II was then in poor health, but once more nothing came of these plans.<sup>174</sup>

Thanks to a pension granted by Pius II and continued by Paul II, Thomas was able to bring over his three children before his death in 1465. Cardinal Bessarion then oversaw their education and arranged for the marriage of Thomas's daughter Zoe to Grand Duke Ivan III of Moscow. By that union, the Palaiologan double-headed eagle passed to the rulers of Russia. The symbol had already been known in Rome as the emblem of the Byzantine emperor, as seen by its appearance on the bronze doors of St. Peter's from 1445. There it decorates the stern of the ship that brought Emperor John VIII to the Council of Ferrara/Florence.<sup>175</sup> After Thomas's death, his eldest son, Andreas, assumed his father's titles, also enjoyed papal support, and was regarded as the rightful heir to the Byzantine Empire by the papal court.<sup>176</sup> Andreas's seal featured the double-headed eagle, as did that of his uncle Demetrios, who had ruled the Morea with Thomas before the Ottomans. Seals of Thomas Palaiologos likely had the same device, but apparently none have been preserved.<sup>177</sup> Although the eagle referred to the imperial family generally, its immediate referent in Rome during the 1460s was Thomas Palaiologos and his son.

The Sassoferrato icon is best understood as a gift from Thomas Palaiologos to Paul II, similar to the gifts of other immigrant Byzantines in this period and later.<sup>178</sup> Miniature mosaics were a medium that the pontiff assiduously collected, and a mosaic icon of St. Demetrios would have filled a gap in his collection, to judge from the inventory while he was a cardinal. Moreover, the pope's coat of arms had a rampant lion similar to that on the shield of St. Demetrios, so the saint would now defend the pope as he once did a Byzantine general. As a gift, the icon's box is perfect gift wrapping. Its Greek monogram identifies Paul as the recipient of the gift. The imperial beta cross refers to the donor and signals that something important is inside but does not spoil the surprise that awaits the initial removal of the box's lid. While more than one cleric or humanist might have had a reason to commission a papal present, Thomas Palaiologos was perhaps the most dependent upon the goodwill of the pope, and the refashioned icon with its imperial insignia and reference to the famous emperor Justinian was a well-chosen gift, for Paul II emphasized the religious and secular authority of the papacy and had his own aspirations for the revival of ancient Rome.<sup>179</sup> The frame's imperial references symbolically reinforced the secular authority of the pope that had been questioned a generation earlier, when Lorenzo Valla had shown that the Donation of Constantine was a forgery, a finding still in dispute during the pontificate of Paul II.

Because the frame's imperial iconography also referred to Thomas Palaiologos, the icon exemplifies what Annette Weiner identified as the "paradox of keeping-while-giving."<sup>180</sup> This object, so redolent of the now-lost Byzantium, ensured that Thomas would be remembered by this gift, just as the coats of arms of a later donor did for two Byzantine manuscripts donated

174 K. M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant, 1204–1571*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1978), 268–75.

175 R. Glass, "Filarete's Hilaritas: Claiming Authorship and Status on the Doors of St. Peter's," *ArtB* 94 (2012): 548–71, at 559, fig. 16.

176 Harris, "A Worthless Prince?," 538; Nicol, *Immortal Emperor*, 115–16.

177 S. Lambros, "Σφραγίδες τῶν τελευταίων Παλαιολόγων καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτοῦς," *Νέος Ἑλλ.* 1 (1904): 416–32, at 422–26. The Dumbarton Oaks online catalogue of seals has no entry for Thomas Palaiologos. On the seal of Andreas see G. E. Tipaldos, "Εἶχον οἱ Βυζαντινοὶ οἰκόσημα," *ΕΕΒΣ* 3 (1926): 206–22, at 209.

178 An analogous gift is the two manuscripts given to Paul II by another Greek émigré: see N. H. Minnich, "Alexios Celadenus: A Disciple of Bessarion in Renaissance Italy," *Historical Reflections / Réflexions historiques* 15 (1988): 47–64, at 48, 50. The language of the manuscripts is not mentioned, but the context, a letter about the gift of Greek lectionary to Pope Julius II as well as the origin of the donor, suggests that these were Greek texts.

179 Christian, *Empire without End*, 101–3; A. Modigliani, "Paolo II e il sogno abbandonato di una piazza imperiale," in *Antiquaria a Roma: Intorno a Pomponio Leto e Paolo II* (Rome, 2003), 125–61, at 125–54.

180 *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley, 1992).



to Pope Innocent VIII (1484–92).<sup>181</sup> Although the papal financial support was more than an adequate return gift for Thomas, the pope may also have granted Thomas the honor of burial at St. Peter's, for Paul had long controlled the "ceremonial symbolism" of the church, first as the archpriest of the church from 1445 and then as pope.<sup>182</sup> The reframing of the Sassoferatto icon in Rome and Thomas's presentation to Paul II must have taken place in the eight-month period between the pope's accession on 30 August 1464 and the despot's death on 12 May 1465, dates that are contemporary with the ancient epigraphy on the Roman tombs of Thomas Palaiologos and Basileios Bessarion.



And thus an unframed miniature mosaic, made, it was argued, in the early fourteenth century for Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotos, came to Rome a century later. Before it had existed in the devotional present for the protostrator, whose shield St. Demetrios holds. In Rome, the icon received a gilt silver frame and a decorated wooden container, ca. 1464–65. The new frame


181 An early Palaiologan set of the Gospels and Praxapostolos (Vat. gr. 1158 and 1208) were donated by the last queen of Cyprus, Caterina Cornaro, to Pope Innocent VIII, who had given her refuge in Rome. His coat of arms is on f. 1v and hers on 2r of both manuscripts. I take this opportunity to correct an egregious error of mine in the introduction to *The New Testament in Byzantium*, ed. D. Krueger and R. S. Nelson (Washington, DC, 2016), fig. 1.3 from Vat. Gr. 1208. There the caption for the Queen's coat of arms is transposed to his, which are clearly labeled Innocent VIII.

182 C. M. Richardson, "Saint Peter's in the Fifteenth Century: Paul II, the Archpriests and the Case for Continuity," in *Old Saint Peter's, Rome*, ed. R. McKitterick, J. Osborne, C. M. Richardson, and J. Story (New York, 2013), 342, 347.

changed a Byzantine icon into a humanistic artifact more for the delectation than the veneration of its intended recipient, Pope Paul II. The frame revived ancient epigraphy and anachronically celebrated its proposed and purported donors, Thomas Palaiologos and Justinian, two rulers who do not often appear in the same context. The Renaissance refashioning upgraded the icon from an aristocratic to an imperial commission and made it an objet d'art. The Byzantium it celebrated had then ended, although it did not yet have that name. In the next century, the German humanist Hieronymus Wolff coined the term to distinguish ancient and medieval Greek history.<sup>183</sup> In the 1460s, the icon instead reconciled the ancient and the medieval in a manner that is not medieval. Even for those with a limited comprehension of Greek, that culture held high prestige, and thus the Sassoferatto icon was a suitable papal gift of a Byzantium that now existed only in the memory of the last Byzantines in Rome.

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183 For convenience and according to tradition, I have used the terms "Byzantium" and "Byzantine" in the accustomed manner of Byzantine studies, though agreeing with the objections to those words by A. Kaldellis, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA, 2019). On Wolf, see H.-G. Beck, *Vater der deutschen Byzantinistik: Das Leben des Hieronymus Wolf von ihm selbst erzählt* (Munich, 1984).

 THIS ARTICLE HAS HAD MULTIPLE MIDWIVES. First are several anonymous and onymous readers, who include Ivan Drpić, Rossitza Schroeder, Andrea Olsen Lam, the editorial board of this journal, and its excellent editor, Colin Whiting. I also am grateful for the aid of the civic and museum authorities in Sassoferatto, who took the icon out of its display case with difficulty

and allowed me to photograph it and its container. Yuri Piatnitsy, Fabio Barry, Robert Ousterhout, and Michael Waters furnished essential photographs in our travel-less times, and Andreas Rhoby advised on epigraphy. The topic, minus the Renaissance section, was first presented at the Byzantine Studies Conference in 2013.